Growing Employment and Achieving Inclusion

Papers from the Integra Conference Dublin November 1997

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Table of Contents

	Introduction	**iii**
1	***Opening Addresses***	**1**
	The European Employment Strategy: Structural Policies Solidarity and the Role of EMPLOYMENT – Integra *Ismo Gronroos-Saikkala*	3
	Irish Structural Policies in the Context of the European Employment Strategy *Séamus Ó Móráin*	9
2	***Issue Papers***	**21**
	Achieving Labour Market Inclusion: Perspectives from Integra *Maria Hegarty*	23
	Meeting the Challenge of Solidarity *Fred Powell*	34
3	***Enterprise Development***	**49**
	Sunflower Recycling *Bernie Walsh*	51
	Ag Tógáil ár bPobail *Liam Ó Cinneagáin*	58
	The Caravan Repair and Fire Safety Project *Edward Rispin*	63
4	***Building Bridges to Employment***	**71**
	The TRAMLINES Project *Donnacadh Hurley*	73
	The Theatrical Crafts and Production Skills Training Programme *Robbie McDonald*	81
	LUDO: An Interactive Training Initiative *Peter Lynch*	87

5	***Improving Labour Market Services***	**93**
	Making the Future Work *Freda Keeshan*	95
	The Pathways Project *Martin Walters*	106
	The Hive Project *Carol O'Sullivan*	116
6	***Closing Address***	**123**
	What can Policymakers Learn from Local Actions? *Andy Hirst*	125

Introduction

The achievement of high rates of economic and employment growth has been viewed for some time now as the necessary foundation on which to build effective action to combat social exclusion. It was argued that, without an increase in employment, policies to combat social exclusion were, at best, constrained, or at worst, misguided. In line with this, the pursuit of employment growth has been a priority objective at national and EU levels.

While economic growth and, in particular, employment growth have been viewed as necessary conditions to combat social exclusion, it is now generally agreed that their achievement alone is not sufficient to ensure that social exclusion is effectively tackled. At the level of the EU, running through the White Papers on economic and social policy, and more recently in the Pact for Employment, is a recognition that there is need for solidarity and inclusion and for policies that give active expression to these principles. In Ireland, commitment to taking action to secure inclusion has been underlined in a number of key policy documents: for example, *Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness*, *Sharing our Progress* (the National Anti-Poverty Strategy) and *Growing Our Employment ~ Sharing our Growth* (A Comprehensive Policy for Enterprise and Jobs).

The need to develop policies that effectively achieve and underpin social inclusion is based on a number of factors. First, free market mechanisms do not of themselves ensure an equitable distribution of resources, opportunities or incomes. Second, aspects of state policy have in the past reinforced rather than reduced inequalities and perpetuated social exclusion. Third, achieving inclusion is precondition for the long term security, cohesion, and development of society and the economy.

It is in the context of the above that the European Commission, in 1995, introduced the EMPLOYMENT Initiative. By including a separate strand - Integra - the aim was to give priority to tackling social exclusion. As exclusion from the labour market was identified as the central, though not the sole, cause of social exclusion, the main aim of Integra is to improve access to the labour market and the employability of people excluded or at risk of exclusion from it.

In Ireland, 29 projects funded under Integra began their preparatory actions in late 1995. These are now concluding their activities. Currently, 31 new projects are commencing their programmes of activity. Over the period 1995 to 1999, total expenditure under Integra will be in the region of IR£18 million, of which 75 per cent will be financed by the European Social Fund. This is supporting a very wide range of actions including the development and delivery of new systems of educational and vocational provision, the design and delivery of training linked to employment, capacity building in relation to the social economy and organisations working in the community and voluntary sector, and the development of services in the areas of guidance and mentoring.

During the period over which the first 29 projects have been in operation (i.e., 1995 to 1997) there has been a significant turnaround in Ireland's economic performance. However, commentary on this success story has almost exclusively focussed on a number features such as the high rates of economic and employment growth, low inflation, falling national debt, rising tax revenues, and a falling Exchequer Borrowing Requirement.

As is indicated in the opening addresses to the conference, despite a reduction in unemployment, long-term unemployment still remains a significant problem. Also, other indicators suggest that progress in relation to economic and employment growth has not been matched by a reduction in the numbers experiencing social exclusion. Such evidence as there is - be it based on the numbers of people reliant on welfare income, in inadequate housing or homeless, or literacy and numeracy rates, or the proportion of

households dependent on low paid employment, or rates of completion of second and third level education among the children of economically disadvantaged parents, or the persistence of racism and discrimination - all points to the persistence of social exclusion. Given this, and the unprecedented rates of economic and employment growth achieved in Ireland over the past number of years, a central question now concerns the nature of the policies and actions required to ensure that social exclusion is effectively tackled and that the achievement of growth can be harnessed to secure social inclusion.

The aim of this conference was to contribute to shaping the development of such policies and actions. Given that employment is growing rapidly, the main themes addressed were concerned with examining strategies to assist people experiencing social exclusion enter the labour market. From the range of possible themes that are presented by the work of the projects in Integra, three were explored during the conference: enterprise development; building bridges to employment; and improving labour market services. As is illustrated in the papers themselves, each of these is focused in a particular way on the achievement of labour market inclusion and each presents particular lessons for policy and practice.

A number of general themes run through the papers presented. These include: the need for policy commitments to achieving inclusion to be backed by sufficient resources; the importance of focussing on effectiveness rather than just on costs; and the need to mainstream the lessons arising from projects in Integra. Each of the papers presented provides concrete illustrations on which to build a discussion of these issues. In this regard, they provide signposts to the nature of the policy action required to ensure the achievement of inclusion.

1

Opening Addresses

The European Employment Strategy: Structural Policies, Solidarity and the Role of EMPLOYMENT-Integra

Ismo Gronroos-Saikkala
Office for the Human Resource Initiatives (ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT), European Commission

The purpose of this event is to contribute to shaping effective policies and actions to combat exclusion from the labour market. Ireland's contribution in this task is essential as there is knowledge and expertise in the country that can be used in many other places in Europe. I am now particularly thinking about the areas of work in this conference, enterprise development and routes to employment provided by training linked to employment and labour market services.

My primary task will be to describe the political context and some probable features of the machinery within which we will be working when combating exclusion in the Union over the next period of the Structural Funds (i.e., the years from 2000 to 2006). This is difficult as work has just begun in this area but the situation is also very interesting as so many doors are still open for negotiation.

Before speaking about the future I would like to say some words about where we are with the implementation of the Human Resource Initiatives (i.e., ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT) at present. The first round projects (i.e., those operational from 1995 to 1997) are now finalising their work. We have been having the mid-term evaluations over the last year and the Commission, for its part, has actively urged the Member State authorities and all

the partners to adapt, to adjust, to fine tune their programming efforts in the light of experience, during this final period.

A series of major European conferences are taking place during this period. There was one on Objective 3 in October 1997 in Bruges, several on the EMPLOYMENT Initiative (e.g., Youthstart in Stockholm, Integra in Barcelona and NOW in Brussels), and we are working towards the European Social Fund Congress that will be held in Bermingham, under the United Kingdom Presidency, in May 1998. These conferences are building on the experiences of the first round projects and we are awaiting their final results.

But these events are also occasions when we try to build on all our work with the European Social Fund. For example, at the moment we are working to draft the new Structural Fund regulations. This is a very important period to spell out for the next phase the messages of good experience, bad experience, good policies, and policies that haven't worked.

We are now finalising the second round of project selection in all of the Member States, resulting in total in around 1,400 Integra projects. Some of you here form part of them and I am sure that you will have the opportunity on occasions like this to demonstrate in the future what you have learnt.

I want to offer you some ideas on the reform of the Funds for the period after 1999 placing that reform in the political context now developing in the Union following the Amsterdam Treaty.

In the field of employment and social policy, the Amsterdam Treaty certainly provides a huge new potential for a concerted effort on jobs, in a way that was never possible before. Also, in the new Treaty, apart from the Employment Chapter, there is the new Employment Title as it is called, which comes for the first time into the Treaty. Additionally, we have a special Social Chapter, which includes the commitment to promote measures to fight against social exclusion. That means that the Union can design measures to support and complement the efforts of the Member States.

This is obviously a very important development politically. Many of you will remember that some governments blocked the Poverty 3 programme and its follow up, on the grounds that there was no legal competence in the Treaty. The Amsterdam Treaty, when ratified will now give a new possibility for action.

The Commission's Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies for 1998, prepared for the Jobs Summit, make the relationship between macroeconomic success and social progress very clear. They recognise the fact that while economic policy weaknesses have been the root cause of unemployment it has turned into long-term and high youth unemployment because of a lack of emphasis on employability that has also weakened our capacity to adjust. What we need now to promote job creation and combat unemployment is an integrated strategy based on the four pillars of the Guidelines: encouraging entrepreneurship, promoting employability, facilitating adaptability, and underpinning equality of opportunity.

To be able to tackle the employment problems we have also to reform our machinery. The process of preparing the reform of the Structural Funds is now well underway and key elements were outlined in the Commission's *Agenda 2000* Communication in July last. We are now actively preparing the Draft Regulations for the Structural Funds for the period 2000 to 2006. The Commission, for its part, has proposed that the European Social Fund in that period should have as one of its central objectives to fight against social exclusion – the fight against social exclusion locked into a much more dynamic, concerted employment strategy.

The four key goals of the reform are:

- to strengthen the policy focus of the Funds and embed them within overall efforts to combat unemployment and social exclusion;
- to streamline the structure of Objectives to ensure optimal targeting and impact and reduce the number of Community Initiatives;

- to simplify radically our administrative and financial processes; and,
- to re-model the partnership between the Commission and the Member States to allow these changes to be successfully carried through.

We need to meet these challenges to get the best value from our efforts and resources. But, and most importantly for us today, the issue of combating social exclusion is clearly stated in the new Treaty as one of the six objectives of social policy to be pursued by the Union and the Member States. The Commission is, therefore, currently examining the implications of these new provisions and what possible strategy and action plan might be proposed when the new Treaty comes into force.

Looking at the new Objectives and Initiatives under the *Agenda 2000* proposals, the new Objective 3 will have two main functions:

- to provide a common framework for all European Social Fund interventions across Objectives 1 and 2 thereby providing a consistent approach between European and national human resources development strategies on the one hand, and regional actions on the other; and,
- to operate as a complementary Objective, supporting human resource development measures outside Objectives 1 and 2.

The European Social Fund is the Union's principal form of support for Member States' labour market policies. Its main mission is to support the reform of labour market policies and practices in line with the Employment Strategy and the annual employment guidelines. Mechanisms which guarantee this horizontal role in the next programming period will be an indispensable part of the reformed regulations.

We are making good progress in defining the policy content of the new Objective 3. The *Agenda 2000* paper sets out four areas of activity:

- active labour market policies to fight unemployment;
- combating social exclusion;
- lifelong education and training systems to promote employability, and,
- accompanying economic and social change.

Combating social exclusion is absolutely central to our economic and social concerns and the future programmes concerned with this area of activity should be innovative in terms of design and delivery. The question is: how can the Initiatives assist in shaping this new priority? Better links must be made between the lessons of the Initiatives and the drafting of mainstream programmes.

For example, integrated pathways are well documented in the Initiatives but as an explicit priority only in a small number of the Objective 3 Operational Programmes. Secondly, there is no reason why arrangements for some transnational co-operation could not be part of the mainstream Operational Programmes. Our task is to demonstrate the added value of the transnationality of the Initiatives.

We remain convinced that there should be a substantial component within the Funds dedicated to innovation and transnational partnership. We have responded to views on current arrangements by proposing a significant reduction in the number of Initiatives and we are working on the key human resources initiative in the area of equal opportunities. There are four elements I would like to mention here.

Firstly, one issue under debate is whether, and to what extent, the innovation component should be linked with the transnational component. Whatever happens, we want to retain Initiatives with a strong transnational element, since experience demonstrates the value of sharing ideas.

Secondly, integrated pathways can only be achieved if we break down some of the "departmental boundaries" that have existed between different actors. In this respect, Ireland already has more experience than many Member States.

Thirdly, the business community must be more actively engaged in the process. There are signs that more and more SMEs are realising that "you can't build profitable business in a social waste land" as Mr Jones expressed it in the Integra conference in Barcelona. It makes commercial sense to be more socially responsible.

Finally, NGOs and private foundations are growing in number and variety. They play a particularly important role in engaging the active participation of excluded or marginalised people. They are becoming more professional and have been successful in new forms of job creation. This must be further encouraged.

Many of the bodies that are promoters at a local level are running small projects. They are also often totally perplexed and unfamiliar with the bureaucratic language that we tend to use. Therefore, the Commission has suggested that one per cent of European Social Fund resources should be set aside in each of the Member States, deliberately to trigger these projects which would be freed from the normal bureaucratic rules applied to other projects. This is the idea of social risk capital, because the fact is that the promoters themselves are often taking great risks at the local level in difficult circumstances where the chances of success at the outset may not be very great.

To summarise, as we look now to the turn of the century, with its the demographic and economic challenges and the huge pressures on our social protection systems, we are going to be forced to do things in a new way whether we like it or not. Between us – the Commission, Member States, social partners, NGOs, project promoters – we can develop a new blueprint for the Structural Funds which responds both to our own criticisms of the way they work today and to our understanding of the challenges they will face tomorrow.

Finally, we shouldn't forget that we still have until the end of 1999 to conclude the current period of programming. This gives us two years to tackle the problem of exclusion from the labour market with present means. This is the major task of today.

Irish Structural Policies in the Context of the European Employment Strategy

Séamus Ó Móráin
Assistant Secretary
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Briefly, what I want to do this morning is to situate Ireland's employment challenge in the context of the evolving European Employment Strategy - with particular reference to the outcomes of last week's Employment Summit. I will look at some of the structural policies which we have been operating and see how they relate to the European prescription and I will try to identify some of the new challenges we face and the directions we must go in further implementing that European Strategy.

I think it would be true to say that we have been very positively disposed towards the evolution of the European Employment Strategy. We recognise – as the new element in the Treaty of European Union now states – that "Employment is a matter of common concern within the Union". In other words it is appropriate that we should seek to address it on a co-ordinated basis. We share part of the 18 million unemployed in Europe, of whom about eight million are long-term unemployed and some five million are young unemployed.

None of us on our own have the complete answer to this scourge. Even at the level of sharing "best practice" with one another, we have something to learn from the range of instruments and policies being operated at the European level in the fight against unemployment. I believe myself that the added value of co-ordination at the European level can go further than that however. The synergistic effect of working together, of both analysing and

formulating policies, can generate new approaches and the possibility of doing things that we might otherwise not have contemplated.

We know the nature and scale of the employment challenge that exists at the European level. So how do we see Ireland's continuing employment challenge in that context? It is easy enough to rattle off some of the recent good news. We know that Ireland has been enjoying strong economic growth in recent years – averaging around 7.5 per cent per annum over the past three years. This has arisen from a coherent strategy based on sound macroeconomic policies of fiscal consolidation, low inflation, improved competitiveness and from policies of structural reform. This progress has been underpinned by a series of National Programmes agreed with the Social Partners which have given our strategy both a stability and credibility.

The outcome has been:

- economic growth of 4.9 per cent on average over the past 10 years and 7.5 per cent over the past three years;
- employment growth of some 240,000 over the same period - it has come close to 4 per cent per annum since 1993, the highest level in Europe;
- the unemployment rate down from 16 per cent in 1993 to 10.3 per cent this year;
- Government deficit down from about 8 to 0.4 per cent; and,
- Government debt down to about 72 per cent.

This outcome has been achieved in the face of strong labour force growth of over 14 per cent since 1989 and by 7.4 per cent from 1993 to 1996 as a result of:

- demographic changes resulting from strong inflows of young people into the labour force;
- relatively low but fast rising female participation;
- a reduction in emigration – indeed a net inflow of returning emigrants into the country.

As a consequence of these factors, and notwithstanding our strong economic and employment growth, we still retain a significant unemployment rate at 10.3 per cent.

A clear structural problem is the current level of long-term unemployment. We know that long-term unemployment is associated with low levels of education, low skills levels as well as other disadvantages, all of which militate against finding a job in the competitive environment for jobs which I have already referred to.

There are some good straws in the wind. Long-term unemployment has fallen from a high of 9 per cent some years ago to 5.6 per cent currently. Much of this is due to a concerted programme of direct interventions aimed at providing work in the social economy or through subsidised employment or self-employment. The numbers involved in such programmes are close to 75 per cent of the numbers recorded as long-term unemployed in the recent Labour Force Survey.

Youth unemployment, although again showing much improvement, is still out of kilter with the overall rate of unemployment – standing at around 17 per cent as against the overall rate of some 10.3 per cent, but at least down from the mid-twenties where it stood some years ago.

Our employment rate for women is also low relative to the European average, standing currently at some 43 per cent relative to the European average of some 50 per cent, although again female participation is increasing at a much faster rate than male participation.

We know that unemployment, in addition to being an economic waste, is interrelated with poverty and social exclusion particularly when it is reinforced by being concentrated geographically and indeed when it becomes inter-generational. Reducing unemployment, together with associated issues of reducing early school-leaving, tackling the problem of urban black

spots and rural poverty, are central to Ireland's Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The continuing scale of our problem with unemployment clearly dictates that it must stay top of the agenda. Tackling this problem, together with the associated problem of social exclusion, is at the heart of Partnership 2000, the current Social Partner Agreement. This agreement provides a framework for the development of Ireland's employment system, including priorities for the investment of EU Structural Funds. It will also be relevant to developing Ireland's Action Plan called for under the new EU Employment Guidelines, which I will come to in a moment.

I suppose if one is to seek to identify a starting point for the Integrated Employment Strategy – as it is now called at the European level – one would ascribe it to the Delors 1993 White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment. That White Paper undertook an analysis of the prevailing economic condition in Europe as well as of the new emerging economic order. It signalled a range of weaknesses in the European economy *viz*.:

- the rate of growth had shrunk from around four to two per cent per annum;
- unemployment had been steadily rising from cycle to cycle (it then stood at 17 million; it now stands at 18 million); and,
- our competitive position *vis-à-vis* the US and Japan had worsened as regards employment, share of export markets, R&D and innovation, and the development of new products.

It identified a range of truisms about the new economic order based on impact of the globalisation of trade, the emerging new technologies and the changing pace of those technologies, new approaches to work and work organisation, and the emergence of the knowledge-based society. Europe would need to adapt if it was to remain a first order player in this new economic environment. The policy prescription was, in the first instance, based on sound macroeconomic policies of fiscal and budgetary consolidation, stable monetary policies and low inflation, complemented by policies of structural reform based on

investment in human resource development, research and development, improved competitiveness and labour market policy reform.

While the macroeconomic dimension was being driven by the process of moving towards monetary union and the adoption of the so-called convergence criteria, the first clear indication of moving towards a co-ordinated approach with respect to structural policies emerged from the Essen European Council in December 1994. There the focus was on reform of labour market policy in particular aimed at:

- encouraging more investment in vocational training;
- reducing indirect labour costs;
- moving from passive to active expenditure;
- increasing the employment intensity of growth through a range of measures such as encouraging wage moderation, new forms of work organisation, and through local enterprise initiatives; and,
- developing programmes for those hardest hit by unemployment – youth and long-term unemployment in particular.

We were all required to produce a multi-annual programme which would reflect the actions we proposed to take in this policy framework and we have been required to report progress on the implementation of those programmes over the past couple of years.

That process was very much a voluntarist one. In fairness too it has been worthwhile in that it has succeeded in getting the Member States to work, broadly speaking, under a common agenda. Likewise, the reporting process has constituted a vehicle through which the integrated Employment Strategy has been able to evolve – as can be witnessed in the reading of the Summit conclusions from the 1995 Madrid and 1996 Dublin Councils.

However, perhaps the most substantive evolution in the whole process came with the Amsterdam Council and in particular with the insertion of the new Employment Chapter into the Treaty of

European Union. As I said at the outset, the revised Treaty now recognises that employment is a matter for common concern at the level of the Union – that is, it is recognised as an appropriate area to be co-ordinated at European level. In particular the new Employment Chapter gives the co-ordination process some bite – it enables the Commission to propose employment policy guidelines for adoption by the Council of Ministers on a qualified majority basis. Furthermore, it puts in place a surveillance process whereby implementation of the Guidelines will be monitored and recommendations may be directed to the Member States with regard to their implementation performance.

While the new Treaty does not yet have effect, the Prime Ministers, at the Amsterdam Council, mandated the immediate implementation of the provisions of the Employment Chapter including the preparation of Employment Policy Guidelines. It is these Guidelines that have been the main focus of attention in the run up to last week's Employment Summit.

The Guidelines themselves are based on a four pillar framework aimed at:

- **promoting employability** through programmes aimed at reintegrating the long-term unemployed and young unemployed into the labour market, reducing early school-leaving, strengthening apprenticeships, increasing investment in human resources, reducing indirect costs on labour, especially at the lower paid end of the market;
- **promoting SME's and entrepreneurship** through seeking to reduce administrative burdens, improving access to finance, making it easier and less costly to establish businesses, reducing the burden of taxation on labour;
- **promoting adaptability** essentially through the promotion of partnership at the level of the firm, strengthening support for training in business; and,
- **promoting equal opportunities** through facilitating increased participation by women in the labour market.

Ireland has no difficulty in subscribing to this policy framework. Indeed many of the policy prescriptions proposed under the Guidelines are already in place here so, to that extent, the proposed Guidelines will serve to re-enforce existing national effort.

If we take first the **employability pillar**, Ireland has an array of instruments in place aimed at promoting reintegration and preventing drift into long-term unemployment. These include the various fiscal initiatives, incentives or adjustments aimed at increasing the incentive to work. I include here the adjustments to income tax rates and the reductions and exemptions in PRSI rates which have been focused on in recent budgets. No doubt more remains to be done in this domain.

We have the range of back to work incentives including the Back to Work Allowance Scheme (BTWAS), Family Income Supplement as well as the concessions which have been made in secondary benefits so as to smooth the transition from unemployment to work.

We have a range of competence enhancing measures. These are delivered mainly by FÁS but include the contribution made by CERT, the Department of Education and Science through the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affair's Third Level Allowance scheme.

We have direct subsidies - BTWAS could perhaps be included here, but more specifically there is the targeted Jobstart allowance.

And lastly, we have direct employment programmes which have primarily a reintegration objective but which, in addition, generate many worthwhile works or projects at local community level.

So we have not been uninventive in generating responses aimed at promoting reintegration. However, if we were to offer an overview of our approach it is that we have perhaps had an excessive tendency to keep topping up or adjusting what we're

doing in an effort to make the reintegration process more attractive – but with the effect of making the whole system excessively complex. Thus, we find unemployed people finding it increasingly difficult to determine if they would be better off remaining unemployed – as against taking a modestly paying job. Or we find that we are simply shifting the unemployment bottleneck further down the line – as, for example, through the constant "enhancement" of programmes such as Community Employment.

Our focus under the **entrepreneurship pillar** has concentrated on a number of areas aimed at:

- a dedicated programme of action to implement the findings of the *Task Force Report on Small Business* which itself was built on a number of pillars which mirror elements proposed in the Commission Guidelines including:

    - improving access to finance;
    - rewarding risk; and,
    - reducing administrative burdens.

In addition, we have also focused on:

- reducing non-wage labour costs; and,
- easing the transition to work.

Instruments used under these headings include a two tier PRSI system with a reduced rate applying below a specific level, an allowance of £80 per week before PRSI is applied to wages, the BTWAS, reductions in the tax wedge, creating a nation-wide support structure in the form of County Enterprise Boards to support the creation of small business, and promoting local development policies.

Under the **adaptability pillar**, the strategy at national level is to encourage adaptability and flexibility through the development of real partnership down to the level of the firm, to promote investment in human resource development through, for example,

the range of prescriptions set out in the Education White Paper and the White Paper on Human Resource Development, the progressive adaptation of the welfare and employment regulation systems to new work patterns – for example, by extending social insurance and employee protection to part-time workers.

Under the **equal opportunities pillar**, the ongoing convergence of the Irish female participation rate with the European average is a clear signal that we are at least moving in the right direction. Four out of five people joining the workforce at present are women.

There is also a commitment – through Partnership 2000 – to seeking to remove further obstacles by, for example, removing the remaining barriers to women's participation in training and through seeking to improve female participation in non-traditionally female areas of activity – such as apprenticeships. Work is currently ongoing on the development of a national framework for the development of the childcare sector as well as in the provision of capital infrastructure for childcare in disadvantaged areas.

So what is new about the Guidelines agreed at last week's Summit?

First of all, there is the process itself. Pursuant to the adoption of the Guidelines, each Member State will be required to develop an Action Plan outlining how it intends to implement the Guidelines. The UK Government has already signaled that a priority of its Presidency, starting in January 1998, will be to ensure that those Action Plans are submitted in sufficient time to enable a first round evaluation to be completed on them and reported into the Cardiff Summit in June 1998. Thereafter, the Action Plans, and performance under them, will be subject to annual scrutiny and the European institutions will have the competence to make recommendations to Member States regarding their implementation performance. The moral pressure which that creates is not to be underestimated.

The surveillance process in many respects mirrors that adopted in relation to the EMU convergence criteria. At the time those criteria were developed – relating to budget deficits, inflation and Government debt – many thought that they would be unattainable for many countries within the kind of time scales envisaged. Yet, the majority of EU Member States are already, or are close to, attaining them.

If I might turn to some of the specific commitments in the Guidelines, let me pick out those which constitute a real challenge so far as Irish performance is concerned. The first comes under the employability category and is a requirement to commit ourselves to a preventative strategy whereby over a five year timeframe we will reach a situation where:

- every young person, before they hit six months unemployment, is offered a new start in the form of a job or other employability enhancing measure – such as training, work experience, guidance, job-search counselling etc; and,
- the same offer will be made to every adult unemployed person before they hit the twelve month unemployed threshold.

Such actions will need to be combined with reintegration actions for people who are already long-term unemployed.

Such a policy framework, in my view, has substantial implications for the ordering of labour market policy in Ireland. They re-emphasise the need to considerably strengthen our Employment Service, they imply a process of systematic engagement with all unemployed people early in their unemployment spell, and they imply an approach of strengthened conditionality in relation to entitlement to ongoing social security support.

A further element in the Guidelines is that of a commitment to determine a target for increasing the numbers of unemployed people given access to training, from the current level to the level of the best performing three Member States in the Union. A benchmark of 20 per cent is mentioned in the Guidelines as reflecting best practice – although candidly we have some

technical reservations about that figure. But the principle is there to raise our efforts to the level of the three best performing Member States.

Other elements in the Guidelines which I think will be less problematic for us include:

- commitments to reducing early school-leaving – we are commencing a major effort in that regard pursuant to the mid-term review of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme where we have made a major reallocation of resource towards that particular end;
- reducing obstacles within the tax and social security regimes which constitute obstacles to self-employment;
- continuing to reduce the tax burden on labour;
- assessing the potential of the social economy to generate new employment;
- supporting adaptability through, for example, tax breaks for the development of worker training;
- facilitating female labour market participation through the raising of childcare provision; and,
- facilitating the reintegration of people with disabilities into the labour market.

Overall therefore, it would be fair to say that Ireland is comfortable with the framework of the Employment Policy Guidelines coming from Europe, but there are unquestionably some new and strong challenges to be faced in demonstrating that we are implementing them effectively. Interestingly, but I daresay not suprisingly, there are no miracle solutions out there – the menu of responses which we have developed in Ireland stand up to as much scrutiny as many of those in other Member States. As I indicated, the Guidelines have still to be formally adopted – there is some hope that this may be possible at a Social Affairs Council due to be held on 15th December. At that point the immediate challenge will be to put the process in train for the preparation of our Action Plan which I suspect will be a significant area of attention for myself in the immediate post Christmas period.

2

ISSUE PAPERS

Achieving Labour Market Inclusion: Perspectives from Integra

Maria Hegarty
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Exclusion from the Labour Market and Social Exclusion

National and EU policy analyses and documentation now make frequent use of the concepts *exclusion from the labour market* and *social exclusion*. This growing usage, however, is associated with a lack of clarity and consistency in the use made of these concepts and, more importantly, the presence of ambiguity concerning their relationship to one another. Such is the extent of this that one might be led to make any of the following interpretations:

- exclusion from the labour market is the same as social exclusion;
- social exclusion is caused, either solely or in part, by exclusion from the labour market;
- combating social exclusion is synonymous with combating exclusion from the labour market.

For present purposes, what I propose is to briefly identify some of the key differences between these concepts and to sketch their relationship to one another. This is necessary for two reasons. First, because the central aim of Integra is to improve access to the labour market and the employability of people excluded or at risk of exclusion from it by reason of social and economic disadvantage. And, second, the focus of this conference concerns strategies to combat exclusion from the labour market and, consequently, does not deal with the substance of the broader issue of combating social exclusion.

The different meanings, causes and consequences of social exclusion have been the subject of considerable discussion. So too has the nature of the policies required to combat social exclusion. What I want to highlight is that:

- exclusion from the labour market is not the same as social exclusion; and,
- there are different views as to the fundamental causes of social exclusion with exclusion from the labour market being just one of these.

Social exclusion is commonly understood as encompassing inadequate income and a lack of access to adequate levels of social protection and services (e.g., health, housing, education, and legal services). In this sense, social exclusion is not reducible to exclusion from the labour market. Issues such as low pay, confinement to marginal economic activity, for example in the black economy, and indeed, employment in what is termed the *intermediary labour market (*e.g., Community Employment), are salient here. Conversely, one can be outside of the labour market and not be experiencing social exclusion. For example, a person with accumulated wealth but who is not working (e.g., retired) is quite clearly not socially excluded in this sense.

Increasingly, however, social exclusion is seen as involving the effective loss of or the incapacity to claim and exercise social and political rights. In this respect, social exclusion is not equivalent to what is understood as poverty as this is now defined – as, for example, in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. There is a political dimension to social exclusion, particularly in the sense of the effective denial of access to decision-making fora and power, whether these be in respect of one's neighbourhood or society.

Turning to labour market exclusion, this must be understood as broader than unemployment. It is typically manifested by very long periods outside of employment without any realistic chance of gaining employment. People experiencing exclusion from the labour market are not just simply out of work, they typically have very low levels of qualifications, some have literacy problems,

some may be ex-drug users, some may have offending histories etc. These characteristics are not, however, the only reason for exclusion from the labour market. It occurs because of the negative attitude of employers towards particular groups of people and the inability of state services to reach and provide for particular groups of people. Also, it must be recognised that exclusion from the labour market is reinforced by the interaction of the taxation and welfare system whereby welfare recipients face very high marginal tax rates if they do manage to get a job.

Given the focus of this paper, the central question arising from the above is whether social exclusion can be effectively combated by pursuing an employment and labour market strategy or, more importantly, though the sole pursuit of such a strategy. The brief discussion of social exclusion and labour market exclusion suggests that this is not the case. The main points arising in my view are that:

- achieving inclusion in the labour market cannot of itself underpin social inclusion - among the issues arising here is evidence of systematic inequalities in employment and the persistence and prevalence of low pay, evidence that inclusion in employment is compatible with social and political disenfranchisement, and the fact that inclusion achieved solely via the labour market embodies an individualist rather than collectivist approach to problem of social exclusion;
- there are significant dangers inherent in a strategy to combat social exclusion based solely on an approach to combating exclusion from the labour market - the issues arising here include the assumed capacity of the primary labour market to provide employment for all seeking it and the systematic lack of consideration of how the rights and welfare of those outside of the labour market are to be met and legitimised.

Why then should we concerned with exclusion from the labour market and the pursuit of strategies to combat exclusion from the labour market? I would suggest that there is one central and principled reason for this: participation in the labour market represents a form of participation in economic and social life.

Exclusion from the labour market and employment represents exclusion from what is - and this remains likely for the immediate future - a central social and economic institution of society. This view is essentially that there is a *right* to participate in the labour market, that there is a right to employment. In recent times, the advocacy of this right has been most vigorously pursued by the feminist movement and movements of unemployed people. Furthermore, when you examine who is getting paid work, and, more importantly, who is not, it is clear that factors such as class, gender, ethnicity etc. still determine peoples chances of employment and wage rates. Thus, actions to equalise access to and positions in the labour market represent part of an approach to combating social inequality.

From the above we can see that exclusion from the labour market is not the sole cause of social exclusion. Recognising and responding to the interaction between them is crucial. Put simply, the experience of social exclusion can reinforce exclusion from the labour market and, in dealing with exclusion from the labour market, we need to implement strategies which have the capacity to address the personal, family, social and community dimensions of social exclusion. This is the concern of Integra.

Integra: Combating Social Exclusion and Exclusion from Labour Market

The focus on the labour market and employability is evident in the documentation establishing Integra and in that concerned with its implementation at EU and national levels. I would argue that the reasons for this reflect, not just the view combating exclusion from the labour market is central to combating social exclusion, but also difficulties regarding the competencies of the EU, and more particularly of the European Social Fund, with respect to supporting actions other than those concerned with employability and the labour market.

However, in the documentation issued to Member States to assist in the drafting of Operation Programmes for Integra one can

identify a wider set of considerations other than employability and promoting access to the labour market. These include the importance of a bottom-up approach and empowerment. Now, these terms are not unambiguous. Nevertheless, their presence does signal an awareness of the relevance of strategies wider that those focused on increasing the human resources or employability of people excluded from the labour market if the wider issue of social exclusion is to be tackled.

Also, among the stated priorities of Integra are developing *models for improving accessibility and quality in the provision of the full range of public services for vulnerable groups and disadvantaged people*, (and) *developing grassroots capacities and community-based approaches to promoting empowerment and the full inclusion of its target groups* (Guide for the Preparation of Supplement to Operational Programmes under the Community Initiative EMPLOYMENT and the Development of Human Resources incorporating Integra, p. 7).

Moving away from the documentation, in my experience the extent to which the bottom-up approach and empowerment are actually translated into actions with a focus wider than human resource development or increasing employability (or at least not solely confined to this) is dependent on a variety of factors. These include the orientations of national authorities, the priorities of national Operational Programmes, the manner in which these have been interpreted by various bodies including both selection committees and project promoters themselves, and indeed national support structures. Moreover, because there is space for innovation, the emergence of definitions, methodologies and practices which are not only focused on employability but also on the wider issue of combating social exclusion is evident.

The extent to which this is the case would appear to be influenced in a particularly important way by the actual methodologies developed and implemented by project promoters and by the nature of the organisations promoting projects. The former are important to the extent that the methodologies developed incorporate not just a conventional educational or vocational

approach and practice but also embody approaches and practices concerned with the empowerment of participants as social and political actors. The latter is important in that locally-based, community and grass-roots organsations frequently incorporate an agenda of social change or at least a duality of action that includes both practical provision (related to both the labour market and welfare needs of their clients) and social action (Duggan and Ronayne, 1991).

Taking the above on board it is possible to show that Integra, in Ireland, is engaging with the wider issue of combating *social exclusion* by virtue of:

- its incorporation of approaches focused on empowerment and not just employability as indicated in the Guidelines for Integra;
- the inclusion of organisations promoting projects that have social action as well as service delivery objectives; and,
- the actual methodologies pursued by projects (these encompass participant empowerment and not just the acquisition of specific vocational skills).

These features of Integra as they bear on the issue of combatting social exclusion are briefly illustrated below.

First, the priorities identified in the Operational Programme for Integra in many ways reflect a continuity of those previously stated in respect of Horizon/Disadvantaged. This is represented by the strong focus on persons experiencing social exclusion (e.g., Travellers, long-term unemployed, lone parents, drug users and former drug users, communities experience concentrations of disadvantage etc.) and the prioritising of a bottom–up approach to the design of interventions.

Second, and related to the above, is the diversity of approaches found among the projects selected to receive support under the programme. This diversity reflects the range of promoting organisations that have been selected to implement projects and the specific manner in which these engage with the experience of social exclusion on the part of their target groups (see Table 1).

Notable, is the high representation of projects from the non-statutory sector. Given the nature and goals of many of these organisations, this has served to ensure that their actions, while focused on issues of human resource development for their participants or the enhancement of services for their target group, have included approaches that embody principles of empowerment and social action.

Table 1: Breakdown of Organisations Promoting Projects in Integra, 1995-1997 and 1997-1999

	1995-1997		1997-1999	
	N	%	N	%
Educational Organisations	4	14	3	10
Locally Based Organisations	15	52	13	42
Non-Governmental Organisations	4	14	6	19
Social Partnership Organisations	1	3	3	10
Statutory Organisations	5	17	4	13
Private	0	0	2	7
Total	29	100	31	100

Finally, and in recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion and its complex interaction with exclusion from the labour market, a common feature of the projects being implemented under Integra is their multi-faceted and integrated approach. This is represented at a project level by the presence of actions addressing the range of personal, social and institutional factors that result in exclusion from the labour market.

Strategies to Achieving Labour Market Inclusion

Given that employment is growing rapidly we felt that it was important to select and address themes that are particularly concerned with examining strategies to assist people experiencing social exclusion enter the labour market. From the range of possible themes that are presented by the work of the projects we

identified three for examination at today's conference: enterprise development, building bridges to employment, and improving labour market services. As is illustrated below, each of these is focused in a particular way on the achievement of labour market inclusion.

We are looking at **Enterprise Development** because efforts to combat exclusion from the labour market can no longer be solely based on assisting people enter waged employment. There is a need to recognise forms of economic activity outside of conventional waged employment. These include self-employment and enterprise development. The strategy being pursued in Integra can be described as the mediated or brokered approach involving:

- identifying a market combined with stimulating market demand;
- providing the specific technical skills required for product or service provision;
- combining technical skills development with business, personal and teamwork skills;
- establishing infrastructure in terms of workspace and organisation;
- providing start-up and working capital; and,
- providing income support.

We are considering **Building Bridges to Employment** because waged employment is still a major source of employment and the inequality in access to employment remains evident. Employment will remain inaccessible to a vast number of people unless we respond to the multiple difficulties certain people face in obtaining employment.

The strategy being pursued in Integra involves simultaneously addressing issues related to labour supply, demand and the interaction between these. The supply side issues include:

- building on the strengths, motivations, experience and aptitudes of participants;

- identifying the skills required by particular sectors / employers and the delivering quality training to impart these skills;
- providing accreditation that has a currency with employers; and,
- providing quality work experience directly related to identified occupations / sectors of targeted employment.

The demand side issues include:

- working with targeted employers / sectors to breakdown any prejudice; and,
- developing the credibility of the skills acquired by the unemployed with employers (e.g., through their input in the curriculum or actual accreditation).

Some of the important links between supply and demand are the following:

- providing active assistance to employers in relation to recruitment from among groups experiencing exclusion on the labour market; and,
- developing relationships with specific employers / or sectors of employment as a means of linking demand and supply.

We are considering **Labour Market Services** because they are increasingly seen as the gateway to accessing education, training and employment. Furthermore, their practices and role in ensuring equity are increasingly being emphasised given that there are difficulties in reaching and responding to the needs of people who are socially excluded. The strategy being pursued in Integra is concerned with the capacity of these services to be responsive to and engage the most disadvantaged in the labour market. This involves:

- establishing credibility as providers with users;
- accurately identifying and meeting users' needs;
- effective outreach;
- user involvement; and,
- developing linkages with other providers.

Today's Task

In conclusion, the task for today is not an easy one. During the time that Integra has been in operation there has been a significant turnaround in Ireland's economic performance. As yet, however, there is little evidence that the benefits of the improved labour market situation are reaching the people prioritised by Integra. Your job in the workshops is to contribute to the shaping of effective policies and actions to redress this. Otherwise the opportunity provided by our economic growth will be confined to those already included and current inequalities in relation to the labour market will persist.

References

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MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF SOLIDARITY

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The Excluded: Underclass or Undercaste?

In postmodern society the exclusion of the underclass poses the ultimate challenge. The inclusion of a substantial section of the working-class in the consumer society has served to fragment its traditional solidarity. An excluded underclass has emerged defined by its prescribed status as supplicant in the Welfare State. The emergence of what has come to be called "the Underclass" is a potent manifestation of the importance of productive relations in determining class solidarity. The underclass is differentiated from the majority population by age, gender and ethnicity, as well as employment status. A thumbnail demography of the Irish underclass according to a multitude of studies reveals a population marginalised on the periphery of society consisting of the long-term unemployed; lone (usually female) parents; the disabled and elderly, as well as small farmers. Beyond these groups exists several minority groups, which experience social exclusion in its most extreme form, including: Travellers; people suffering from HIV/AIDS; drug abusers; refugees and migrant workers. They are usually excluded from poverty studies further exacerbating their social exclusion. (Gans, 1996:151) has suggested that the term "undercaste" might more accurately describe this "population of such low status as to be shunned by the rest of society".

In 1988 an Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) report on poverty, sponsored by the Combat Poverty Agency, which was the largest poverty study undertaken in the history of the State, concluded that a minimum of one in three people are living on

inadequate incomes in Ireland. The ESRI research also concluded that the situation was deteriorating: the numbers of people in poverty increased at a faster pace in the 1980s than in the 1970s (Combat Poverty Agency, 1988). A follow-up study based upon the 1994 Living in Ireland survey demonstrated that the poor were not as poor as they were in 1987, but that the number of those who fell below the poverty line remained much the same (Combat Poverty Agency, 1996). The Irish situation reflects global trends towards increasing inequality, sometimes referred to as the "Silent Depression", with the poorest fifth of the world's population sharing on average little more than 5 per cent of wealth, while the richest fifth, in contrast, possess between 40 and 60 per cent. In the US, since 1973 incomes for high school drop-outs have declined 23.3 per cent, high school graduates have experienced a 17 per cent drop in income and even some college students (who have not studied to degree level) have had a fall in income of 7.3 per cent. At the other end of the social spectrum, 1 per cent of the nation's richest households has 40 per cent of the country's wealth (Cohen, 1995).

Postmodernity has brought with it a sharp decline in the traditional employment base of the working-class in the manufacturing industries. This has displaced a substantial section of the workforce resulting in unemployment or low paid (often casual) employment in the expanding business services sector e.g. catering, retailing and cleaning services. While it is difficult to fully share Andre Gorz's (1982) view that the traditional working-class has been replaced by a "non-class" of "non-proletarians", the impact of post-industrialisation in dividing the working-class is irrefutable. It is also correct to argue that the name underclass is a misnomer in terms of defining the condition of the socially excluded in postmodern society. As Dahrendorf (1994:13) observes:

> *The underclass does not pose a class problem. Technically, the name, underclass is wrong. Classes are conflict groups based on common interest conditions within a framework of relations…. The underclass on the contrary is more a victim. It is*

> *unlikely to organise and defend the many similar yet not really common interests of its members.*

It is, therefore, not surprising that the 1980s witnessed a reopening of the debate on the nature of citizenship and an assertion of its duties and obligations at the expense of rights and entitlements. The implications for the idea of citizenship have led Dahrendorf (1994:13) to comment "there may be a case for emphasising obligations as well as rights, even for a more sparing definition of citizenship rights, but once they lose their unconditional quality, the door is open not just for the invisible hand of the market (which can be benevolent) but above all for the visible hand of rulers who tell people what to do when". In the case of minority groups, who experience social exclusion at its most extreme (e.g., Travellers, HIV/AIDS victims, drug addicts, asylum seekers, etc.) Dahrendorf's point has particular resonance. Social exclusion increasingly means social polarisation, which is the antithesis of social solidarity.

Exclusion and Desert

The distinguished Irish social policy commentator, liberation theologian and redoubtable poverty crusader, Fr. Séan Healy (1990: 35-36) commentating on the exclusion of "the underclass" observed:

> *Exclusion is experienced in many ways. If you are excluded it means your opinion is not sought and it doesn't count. In fact you are not expected to have an opinion, rather you are encouraged to trust the opinion of the shapers of society. Ultimately it is not only the feeling but the reality of powerlessness.*

He continued:

> *When you are one of the excluded, politicians and policy-makers can ignore you without fear of censure or loss of position. If your rights are infringed, the avenues of redress are very few and haphazard. Since*

> *society fears excluded groups, you are always suspect – guilty until proven innocent.*

Fr. Healy concluded:

> *Generally speaking poverty is the companion of exclusion. People on low incomes have a struggle even to provide the necessary food, clothing and heat. They are not 'less comfortable' than everyone else – they have shorter lives, sicker children, babies which are more likely to die in infancy.*

In this searing analysis of the condition of "the underclass", a minority group denied meaningful participation in citizenship and discriminated against by the majority, clearly emerges. The cause of this profound social inequality belongs manifestly to the sphere political economy, since the exclusion of "the underclass" derives in the first instance, as Fr. Healy suggests, from their poverty. Exclusion from income and welfare is closely linked to exclusion from broader citizenship rights, such as the right to justice and participation.

Poverty campaigners have been sustained by the belief that public opinion is firmly on the side of the poor and that this factor will in the long run lead to the policy changes necessary to abolish poverty. In this regard they may be unduly optimistic. Attitudes towards poverty in Ireland are in fact complex and in some respects contradictory. An MRBI poll published on October 18th, 1988, in the *Irish Times* indicated that 66 per cent of the population favoured a tax rise to help the poor. This poll suggested that Irish public opinion has been, in general, favourably disposed to the poor. But this is an over-simplification. An 1984 ESRI survey carried out by Davis, Grube and Morgan revealed that over 80 per cent of the respondents attributed poverty to fatalistic causes, which suggests it is beyond the competence of the State to abolish it. Furthermore, 57 per cent agreed that "lack of ambition is at the root of poverty" and 53 per cent agreed that "the majority of people on the dole have no interest in getting a job" (Davis, 1984). These latter findings indicate a severe lack of sympathy towards the plight of the poor.

In reality, attitudes towards poverty have fundamentally changed in post-modern society redefining citizenship in terms of duties and obligations rather than the Marshallian construct of social, as well as civil and political rights. This redefinition of citizenship in terms of classical/Victorian values has been associated with the political reassertion of market values. It has legitimated substantial cuts in social expenditure in Ireland between 1987-92, in the interests of fiscal rectitude and unstrained redistributive justice in the Celtic Tiger economy. A more lasting legacy of fiscal rectitude is likely to be the consequent reconceptualisation of poverty in terms of desert dividing the poor into "deserving" and "undeserving" groups based on a moral economy of conduct. Fiscal and moral rectitude have consequently become reflexively connected.

Goodin (1988:279) has summarised the critique of the Welfare State propounded by exponents of ethical notions of moral desert:

> *In its most extreme form, then, the new New Right indictment of the Welfare State in terms of moral deserts holds that the tax transfers system as a whole is just one big informal machine for taking from the deserving and giving to the undeserving. What people have properly earned in the market is taken from them in taxes. It is transferred to welfare recipients who, at least have done virtually nothing to earn these benefits and who, at worst may have come to their present plight through some misconduct of their own and thus be powerfully undeserving of either sympathy or social assistance*.

Post-modern society is therefore a world where social morality and economic productivity are closely intertwined - often mirror images of each other. The choice is to be a "wealth creator" or a wage labourer, with wealth being allocated according to the classical principle of desert, which characterised the Victorian era. Those who are not "wealth creators" or wage labourers are subordinated to "the underclass" and treated according to their supposed deserts in a value system where the unproductive are regarded as socially and economically useless.

The determination of desert is linked to the concept of "dependency". There is a widespread acceptance that the sick, aged and children deserve social support though how much or what form it takes (i.e., institutions or in the community) has been debated over many years. A less tolerant attitude is taken towards the unemployed and single parents who have children born out of wedlock.

This growing emphasis on desert has involved greater reliance on means-tested benefits, considered inferior to "as of right" benefits for several reasons. Applicants are required to submit themselves to a detailed examination that not only includes their financial status but also, due to the rules of eligibility, extends into many aspects of their private lives and personal behaviour e.g. the cohabitation rule. For many the constant requirement to establish their desert, as opposed to their right, as claimants is intrusive, demeaning and stigmatising. Moreover, as Twine (1994:97) points out:

> *A means-tested benefit cannot provide a social right of citizenship because it threatens the integrity of the 'self'. This is because the processes attached to proving you are deserving of means-tested benefits are processes of social exclusion. The stigma attached to means-tested benefits threatens not only the applicants "sense of self", but also their ability to function as normal human beings.*

The plight of the Traveller population further highlights a darker side of the new social morality in contemporary Ireland. The Travellers are treated as people without desert. Accordingly, they are denied the right to halting sites and are persecuted under the vagrancy laws. Social prejudice reinforces the administration of the vagrancy laws creating a system of apartheid between the Travellers and the majority population. The administration of the social welfare system similarly discriminates against the travelling population implying that their attitude towards the benefit system is characterised by moral turpitude. This leaves the system open to the charge institutional racism. Niall Crowley (1993:23) of the Dublin Traveller Education and Development Group, has commented in this context:

The Traveller culture and way of life is not recognised and resourced by the institutions of our racist society. This has real consequences for the Traveller community that are of devastating proportions. Racism is a form of social exclusion.

Workfare and Voluntarism

The reconceptualisation of poverty in terms of poor law values has had profound implications for both the Welfare State and the voluntary sector. Welfare, in some societies, is no longer perceived as a basic right in civil society, where long term structural unemployment has eroded the right to work. In the context of mass unemployment a growing emphasis on duties of citizenship has had tangible outcomes not only in terms of major cuts in welfare expenditure and changes in eligibility criteria but also in transforming the citizens' claim to social rights into a requirement to work in return for welfare - *workfare.* According to its exponents workfare, not welfare, should be the norm for the "undeserving" poor. It is contended by these critics of welfare that the poverty of the underclass is essentially the product of idleness and fecklessness, which are reinforced by dependency. In this new moral economy of conduct a very traditional remedy is prescribed in terms of workfare. What does workfare entail in practice?

Workfare is a coercive requirement imposed on recipients of welfare benefits, originally in the USA, encompassing able-bodied adults under sixty years of age including women with dependent children over six years of age. The inclusion of women with dependent children represents a growing hostility towards lone parents in the developed world. Workfare involves performing work assignments at the minimum wage for a number of hours each week equal to the value of welfare benefits received. Participants in workfare schemes are not considered regular employees and do not acquire employee status or benefits other than workman's compensation. Their assignments are not considered regular jobs. They receive no additional pay. In 1996, President Clinton signed the Welfare Bill that abolished the right to welfare and replaced it with workfare, controversially overturning the New Deal,

established in the 1930s as the basis of the American Welfare State. Mr. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the New Labour Government elected in Britain in May, 1998, declared in similar vein "I am interested in developing a Welfare State built around the work ethic" (Observer, May 11th, 1998). He was referring in particular to Labour's welfare to work scheme for Britain's young unemployed now being applied to other groups such as lone parents.

In essence, workfare in its classical form (now widely adopted in the United States) replaces the right to welfare and defines the claimant as a miscreant who must be punished rather than helped. Workfare, therefore, is arguably simply another phase in a long line of coercive tactics which have been employed against the poor in the same tradition as the anti-begging statues, backed by whipping and the stocks, in the 14th century and the Dickensian workhouses of the 19th century. This is why workfare has been dubbed "The New Poor Law". In Western Europe, according to the Netherlands's Platform for Welfare Affairs, workfare has taken a less classical form. Public Sector employment has been reduced and replaced by "job pools" and other variants on the "workfare" theme, consequently, "normal jobs are being replaced by second-rate jobs: in the interests of economy, financial responsibilities are shifted, without calculating the consequences in terms of unemployment and social exclusion (NPWA, 1995). The Netherlands's Platform for Welfare Affairs (1995:8-9) has concluded that these workfare schemes are likely to have serious social consequences:

> *There is a real danger that the twilight zone of second rate jobs and badly paid atypical work will be extended and that a large part of the social services will be manned from within this twilight zone. A twilight zone where people, unable to get work in the regular labour market, will have no choice but to accept a place(ment). To us this does not seem a very attractive prospect, because it will sustain and legitimise the division of society.*

It is not wholly surprising that the idea of workfare is beginning to take root in Ireland, through programmes such as the Community Employment (CE). Albeit, such schemes in Ireland are, as in other European countries voluntary in marked contradistinction to the US. But there is an essential linkage between work and welfare and a blurring of the boundaries between compulsion and consent. In practice many claimants feel that they have little option but to participate as dutiful citizens.

Workfare, (even in the modified form it has taken in Europe) promises to sharpen social divisions further by removing welfare entitlement from the poor, their most meaningful claim to social rights and an essential pre-requisite for social citizenship. Moreover as the respected American social scientists, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1985) have pointed out in their book, *The New Class War*, workfare envisages a form of economic apartheid typical of pre-democratic societies. Undoubtedly, the development of long-term work schemes for the unemployed has created a degrading alternative to the right to work in labour market. It has opened up a disturbing fissure in society, which is arguably not compatible with citizenship, since it excludes a significant proportion of the population from meaningful participation as citizens.

Workfare is one of the most troubling issues that has ever faced the voluntary sector. It poses a variety of very fundamental challenges of both a practical and philosophical nature. Many voluntary organisations participate in workfare schemes because of funding and/or labour shortages. Indeed, the survival of the voluntary sector may increasingly depend on workfare.

Based on the results of a UCC survey, undertaken by Powell and Guerin, two per cent of the adult population are employed by a voluntary organisation - many as part of a government employment scheme. Detailed analysis of this subject in our book *Civil Society and Social Policy* highlights an important part of the nature of the relationship between the voluntary sector and the State in contemporary Ireland (Powell and Guerin, 1997). Depending on ones political perspective CE schemes can represent either the

enforcement of a workfare model with a coercive ethos or the representation of responsible citizenship. Useful comparisons can be made with other European countries, where there is a commitment to enforced citizen participation in either the armed forces or the voluntary sector. The situation, as already noted, is even more stark in the United States where there is no welfare without a workfare placement, which is frequently located in the voluntary sector.

Workfare is undoubtedly fraught with moral and political hazards for the voluntary sector. It poses a fundamental threat to the basic ethic of voluntarism, relations between professional staff, volunteers and CE workers, and ultimately public support for voluntary agencies. It violates the basis of civic trust inherent in the volunteer's engagement with the community, since it is enforced rather than spontaneous participation. Altruism is replaced by coercion and decency by degradation. Coerced altruism is no answer to structural unemployment and a lack of meaningful training opportunities - which cost real money.

The basic ethic of voluntarism is to contribute by personal choice, without wage or salary, a service to an individual, group or community. Both society and volunteer are enriched by the giving of time and commitment and the gaining of esteem, personal satisfaction and new skills. Workfare seeks to capitalise on the spirit of voluntarism by blurring the boundaries between voluntary community commitment and compulsion. The conflation of workfare and voluntarism has to potential to devalue voluntary activity and create negative images of voluntarism, in the public mind and amongst other volunteers. Given the widespread practice of demonising social welfare recipients, it is unlikely that volunteers would wish to be confused with this group - their underclass and outcaste status further underlines the point.

Workfare also poses a threat for the position of paid professional employees in voluntary agencies by offering free labour as an alternative. Equally for the workfare recipient there is the issue of exploitation arising from doing similar work as paid employees, without similar remuneration or rights. Paid employees are also

placed in the invidious position of assessing the performance of workfare participants. They may not be qualified to do this. Furthermore, they may have ethical dilemmas about being drawn into the "policing system" of the Welfare State.

Moreover, the voluntary sector leaves itself open to the accusation of colluding with government in downloading responsibility from the State. This neatly fits in with current trends in social policy geared towards the promotion of subsidiarity. The principle of subsidiarity means that the smallest social unit should be the first source of support, starting with the family and working up through the community and voluntary organisations to the State, as a last resort. In this manner governments use the voluntary sector to shore up deficiencies in State provision.

Conclusion

In post-modern society, T. H. Marshall's "three legged stool of citizenship" based on political, civil and social rights has become unbalanced. The primacy of market values has turned people into commodities to be discarded through a process of social exclusion. The emancipatory impetus, which social rights conferred upon citizenship during the twentieth century, is consequently under threat. The capacity of the bottom third of the population to participate has been effectively removed. As Twine (1994:105) puts it:

> *Citizens require social resources, health and education not only for economic efficiency but also to participate effectively in furthering their own and other people's civil and political rights, to further their life projects without this approach society continually faces the risk that the social exclusion of apparent minorities may lead to the situation in Nazi Germany or to 'ethnic cleansing' as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is always possible to apply a categorisation to anyone so as to identify them as a minority for social exclusion. Social exclusion was used as a powerful form of sanction and punishment under the New Poor Law in nineteenth*

> *century Britain, and we have lost our sensitivity to its power in the twentieth century*.

So what is the alternative? There is no simple panacea is the short answer, but there certainly is an alternative more socially inclusive approach based upon the promotion of solidarity, which involves a number of key elements. First, Irish Society needs to change its language and ideas regarding the socially excluded in general, which are currently unduly influenced by the "winners and losers" philosophy of the market place. It must discover an idiom which unites rather than divides the country generating a climate of civic trust and social solidarity. To date government has failed to find an idiom to engage the imagination of the country in its present perplexed and angry mood. The word "economic" with its accompanying incomprehensible vocabulary needs to be replaced by "society", a word with a recognisable everyday moral dimension that suggests concern at a human level. By society it is meant the supra-individual element in social life what Durkheim called "representations collectives", consisting of collective sentiments and beliefs, which are necessary to explain the authority of imperative rules and beliefs.

The Church, which has played such a powerful (and often controversial) role in forging a moral community in Ireland, has a very important role to play in this process. Liberation theologians, most notably the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI), have pointed the way. They are undoubtedly the most effective poverty lobbyists in contemporary Ireland. It is to be hoped that their Episcopal superiors will follow the example set by their courageous advocacy of the cause of the poor, which has the powerful authenticity of genuine moral conviction. However, for the Hierarchy this would be to acknowledge the need for the articulation of a civic morality, a challenge which presents the Irish Church with an awkward dilemma in terms of its unyielding adherence to traditional moral discourse, largely focusing on individual behaviour and sexual mores.

Second, social exclusion should be addressed by the development of the participatory democratic structures at grass roots community level, which empower the poor. Unless there is a sense of

involvement in decision-making, the alienation of the excluded will continue to fester. Ultimately, social exclusion raises questions about social justice in a democracy as a prerequisite for participation in citizenship, a fully developed view of social justice has yet to take root in Ireland though the 'just society' concept has been around since the 1960s. Fr Séan Healy, of the CORI, has frankly spoken out on this issue in the *Irish Times* on September 24th, 1992, warning of the "underclass revolt" unless the exclusion from the democratic process is ended. While Fr Healy probably overestimates the revolutionary potential of the underclass, there is a serious potential threat to public order and social solidarity.

Third, the voluntary and community sector, through its espousal of the value of civic participation also has a key role to play in an increasingly secular society. However, the growing confusion between workfare and voluntarism threatens to violate the basic ethic upon which the latter rests. The voluntary/community sector is at a crossroads in terms of its role and direction. Will it allow itself be exploited by the State in downloading its responsibilities for social service provision? The growing co-operation between the voluntary sector and the State threatens to blur traditional distinctions, which could ultimately compromise the integrity of the former and drive away the potential pool of volunteers. The voluntary sector needs to take a hard look at its relationship both with the "social" and the State, if it is to have a healthy future.

Fourth, Irish society needs to decide whether it wants redistributable wealth or live with the consequences of a widening social fracture e.g. rising crime, alienation, disillusion and spiralling violence in social relations. Zero tolerance, which equals zero rights (an essentially authoritarian response based upon repression), is no answer in a democracy.

Finally, if the Celtic Tiger really is to be an opportunity society, it will promote the right to social recognition of all its citizens as equal members of Irish society through genuine training and education rather than the subordination of the Workfare State that reinforces the cultural economic and social dominance of the rich over the poor at the price of decency and democracy.

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3

Enterprise Development

Sunflower Recycling

Bernie Walsh

In setting up Sunflower as an enterprise we did not want to set it up just on the basis of whatever funding was available. We specifically wanted to set it up as a *community business* to recycle waste in the north-inner city of Dublin. However, community business is a no-no where attracting funding is concerned, nobody wants to know it if it is called a community business. As far as we were concerned there was no forum to take a community business anywhere. So we looked at the other funding options available, and the option we chose was to start the business on the basis of Community Employment. We hoped to develop it over a couple of years and then to try and make it a legal entity and to bring it forward as a real employment opportunity.

To lay the foundations for a community business, we had to look at the community in which we are living and working and in which our participants are living. Because I was born and reared in the north-inner city, I knew the background myself. Most of the people involved in Sunflower either live in the area, work in the area or have some kind of commitment to the area.

Training and Development in the Project

The first three months were spent making site visits to other projects – to see what had been done, what had been tried, what had failed and what had worked. We spent a lot of time talking to participants about what they felt would work in the inner city. We looked at customer awareness because we felt that if people were going to go to people's doors to collect recycling materials they would have to be able to communicate with the customer. If they are asked questions, they would have to be able to answer those

questions. There was also some very basic research carried out. For example, each participant took the road that they lived on and researched how much waste came from that road. We also did practical work: arthouse, stained glass, quilt making and so on. These were a basic way of showing people that recycling is not just about collecting waste and selling it on. You can actually look at potential new businesses, (for example, crafts-based) through recycled waste as well. That training proved to be really successful as it gave people the opportunity to talk about recycling other than seeing it just as waste. Now, they no longer see recycled materials just as waste but as a commodity.

The other training we got involved in evolved from the first round of training and from talking to our participants. They were interested in "greening" the project, but ours was not a green project. Nonetheless, we decided we wanted to have some kind of input into horticultural activities within the city. So 12 of the participants did horticultural training for which they received a certificate. It was the first time that the course was ever run outside a college setting and the first time that it was ever run in the inner city. All of the participants also did personal development training because we felt that it was a way of getting people together as a group to talk about issues.

As you can see the training was very wide ranging. However, not all the participants availed of all the training. In particular, we found it very difficult to get the men involved in some types of training. They all wanted to learn how to drive a truck and they all wanted to learn to do forklift driving. So they all did that, with the result that we had seven people who became fully skilled drivers who have all left because they got work. That is a great outcome for them, but now we have to recruit and train new workers.

That is exactly the way it went, some people availed of all the training, other people availed of some of the training. The approach that we took was to sit down and talk to people and explain to them why we felt that it would be good for them to do a specific piece of training. But ultimately it was their choice, there

was nobody railroading them and saying *"well you are in Integra now and you have to do all this"* because, to us, that would be of no use.

Doing the Recycling Work

The work involves the collection of recyclables, bringing them back to a sorting bay, sorting and grading them and then moving them on to somewhere else. Doing that work raises a huge amount of issues. Health and safety, clothing, drinking while driving are issues that arose. But because our enterprise provides a service to people outside our community we really have to be very aware of problems. We had to put in place guidelines at the very start and encouraged people to actually talk to each other about the problems.

We set about putting the people into teams, so we have a collection team, a sorting team and an admin team. Those three teams meet once a week and talk about their work and the development of their work and then once every six weeks we have an overall meeting where everybody shouts at everybody else and blames everybody for what went wrong. It works really well, as people find that they hold their fire for the bigger meeting and if they see that there is a problem, if they think that we are doing something wrong, they are actually quite good at telling us. Here there is a big difference between the first and second year of the project. In the first year they just sat back and let us say, yes we will do it that way. Now their input is really important and they actually know a lot more about recycling than I do, so they will tell you on no uncertain terms that no, we do not want to do it that way.

Transnational Activities

The transnational element of the project worked very well. The Belgians and the Germans both did recycling, but a different type of recycling and they had very good ideas to transfer to our own participants. When they visited us they listened to what our

participants had to say and there was a good information flow and there still is.

We created a CD ROM between the three companies. It looks at recycling businesses in the three different countries, how they are set up, and the problems of setting up. The problems have been the same as ourselves - there is a huge element of this project that works really well and has potential but the actual development of enterprise still has a lot of flaws in it, it needs to be worked on.

The German and Belgian projects exchanged their participants as part of the transnational work. We did not exchange participants because at the time we had 24 participants. A lot of them were lone parents for whom travelling abroad would have been very difficult for practical reasons and it would have caused too much hassle to pick just a few of them to go away. What was decided within the group itself was that either everybody got an opportunity to go abroad or we would just send two people to the meetings to bring information back. The latter is what in fact happened.

Are there Jobs there?

The job opportunities as we see them are within Sunflower itself as an enterprise and in providing waste management expertise to the business sector. This is an important source of employment because in future all companies are going to have to recycle their waste. They know very little about it, it is not their job to know about it, they are doing their own work, but they can now hire experts in waste management. We see that as a potential source of employment for our participants.

We also see the potential for jobs in the area of the development of waste management teams. In this, we would be looking at teams of people who might be starting businesses based on recycling, not as individuals, but as part of a group. Some of our own participants felt that they would not start a business on their own, they would not even consider it, but if there were two or three of them involved they would do it.

Enterprise Development

Enterprise development was a big part of the project from the start. Sunflower itself is an enterprise, but part of the work of the project was trying to develop the enterprise skills of participants. The objective was to facilitate them identify small business opportunities based on recycling that they could develop for themselves. What we felt happened half way through the project, however, was that people got very involved in the work that they were doing. They got really interested in the green issue, and then they were not really that interested in starting enterprises at all.

There were a few people who stayed interested in developing an enterprise. What we felt that we needed to do for them was to set-up some kind of support system within the admin team of Sunflower. So that they could come in and say *"I am going to try and do something. If I write something down can I have it typed up here, can I have some advice."* We contacted one of the local support organisations, Inner City Enterprise and they made an enterprise worker available to us twice a month to talk to people about enterprise development, what type of support they could get, what they needed to do to get it and so on. What we actually found was that the enterprise support systems were very interested in people who knew exactly what they were doing, who had a business plan drawn up and who could come into them and say look this is what I need.

But a lot of our people had not reached that stage yet, they were very much in the infancy stages of enterprise development. They had a bare bit of an idea and that was it. So we started working on feasibility studies. At the moment there are three feasibility studies being done within Sunflower. There is also a big development plan being developed for Sunflower itself. Part of that plan is to develop Sunflower Recycling as an umbrella / resourcing organisation for these smaller businesses. That would mean that if they did not succeed in becoming fully-fledged and independent businesses, they could be resourced in certain ways by Sunflower (for example, with workspace, access to equipment,

administrative back-up) and on that basis could generate some income for their owners.

The Lessons we Learned

What have learned from out experience? We have learned a lot, both good and bad. The main lesson for us is that we started this project off with an awful lot of hope. We did not really have proper premises to begin with, but we felt that once we had proven ourselves that someone would say yes, this works, we will back it. But this never happened.

We were effective in identifying an opportunity to provide a service in the inner city and to provide employment for people in the inner city. We developed a very good training programme. We generated a lot of interest in recycling in the inner city and hundreds of households participated – something that many people said could not be done. We developed Sunflower itself as an enterprise. All of those things worked quite well for us. But other aspects of the project were not so successful.

In particular, I feel that the enterprise aspect of the project did not work. *"Environmental jobs are our future."* That is really a statement of the participants themselves. Before I went to the Integra Conference in Barcelona I was trying to get a catch-phrase that would cover what we felt about the work that has been going on in the project. I think that it is a very comfortable statement because it is a growing field. But I do not think that enough of the participants see enterprise as part of that. There are a number of reasons for that, some of them to do with Sunflower itself, but others to do with the sort of support that is available.

For example, if Sunflower had been on older organisation with a lot more people in it perhaps we could have allocated one person just to do the enterprise development with people. But we did not have that kind of manpower, we are a very young organisation, just two years old in December 1997. We tried to do too much too fast and the reason it did not work as we thought it would was that - when you are looking back and evaluating yourself you have

to be honest - we just did not have the expertise needed to deal with all of these people on-site.

A big problem also is the type of supports which are provided for enterprise development. For example, in the recycling sector premises are quite important. But the one person in the project who actually was ready to start a business in scrap metal could not find anybody who would support him in getting a premises.

Also, for our participants, setting out to develop an enterprise would have been very risky financially. Many of our participants were lone parents with four or five children to support. No matter how entrepreneurial they are, it is very hard for people in that position to take a risk on their own business. The policy supports need to recognise this.

A second area where we felt the learning was negative was to do with the development of Sunflower itself as a community business. We have got to the stage where people are coming to see the project, where we are being asked to speak at Conferences about the project, where we see that Europe is interested in the project. Yet, we are working in a building that is literally falling in on our heads. All of our equipment was donated, our truck, our van, we did not pay for any of them because we did not have the money to pay for any of them

Policy makers have to realise that there is a problem somewhere, there is something not working. Somebody at some stage has to say that yes, money has to be put in place to make sure that these people and others like them can do this work properly. It has to be done or you will just discourage people, like the people on our project, from ever getting involved.

Ag Tógáil ár bPobail

Liam Ó Cinneagáin

Gleann Cholm Cille, Southwest Donegal is a peripheral region with high emigration and unemployment, an area typical of many others in rural Ireland. Since 1991, Oideas Gael, a community-based company, has been operating full-time with the objective of "generating economic activity through the creative use of indigenous resources". This has been done through a number of actions.

Oideas Gael

Oideas Gael organises Irish language and cultural activity programmes for adults from Ireland and world-wide. Our first course was held in 1984 and was attended by 34 students. In 1997, our programmes were attended by over 1,600 adults and 50 per cent of these came from outside the island of Ireland. The project is now worth about £500,000 per annum to the local economy through income from courses, accommodation, entertainment and other associated expenditure.

Foras Cultúir Uladh

This project has been assisted by the International Fund for Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta with total grant-aid of 30 per cent on a total spend of £400,000 on Foras Cultúir Uladh which houses a cultural centre, exhibition area, classrooms, restaurant and self-catering accommodation. This has enabled Oideas Gael to expand and to provide programmes for the community in local development, computers, language and business advice. New semester programmes in association with American Universities will commence in 1998.

Taipéis Gael

Due to the seasonal nature of the Oideas Gael project, the Board researched other possibilities for enterprise development rooted in the indigenous resources of the area and, with the assistance and encouragement from supporters of the project. gained access to Horizon 1 funding to establish Taipéis Gael. This two year programme trained six local unemployed people in the skills of natural dyeing, spinning and weaving with a view to establishing an art-tapestry enterprise producing high quality weaving for a niche market. This enterprise is now in its third year of full-time operation and is developing slowly but surely as a sustainable independent enterprise.

Ag Tógáil ár bPobail

It was within this context that we examined further possibilities for the development of similar enterprises. Again using the expertise and experience of our many contacts, we had a series of discussions with the well-known sculptor, architect and musician Eamonn O'Doherty, a lecturer in Dublin Institute of Technology, Bolton Street.

Initially we focussed on two indigenous features of the area, traditional music and the art of stone-walling. It was decided to pursue the development of a stone-walling enterprise for a number of reasons:

- there is a growing awareness of the importance of retaining the natural environment;
- the skills involved in the art of stone-walling were rapidly disappearing;
- the materials were easily accessible;
- its promotion would enhance the Gaeltacht environment and strengthen our profile as a unique tourism destination;
- it was a skill that would be attractive to the social group (young, single and educationally disadvantaged males) that were most likely to leave the community; and,
- it had the potential of being a unique enterprise.

The project was accepted by Integra and Údarás na Gaeltachta as being worthy of support.

A two-year enterprise development and training programme was put in place, advertised and publicised. A careful selection process was followed to ensure that the participants would be committed to the project and stay with it for its duration and hopefully afterwards. This was seen as being a very important ingredient to the eventual success of the project.

Several modules were scheduled, some already recognised modules of the National Council for Vocational Awards, others were Locally Developed Modules (LDM). The modules were:

1. The History of Stone (LDM)
2. Drawing
3. Environmental, Artistic and Dwelling construction (LDM)
4. Communications
5. Business and Enterprise Skills (LDM)
6. Transnational Exchanges
7. Work Placement.

Each module has been undertaken with care and ongoing evaluation as regards its impact is conducted regularly. All modules are being delivered by the best in the business to ensure that quality is seen to be an essential ingredient from the start.

As we enter the last six months of the project we are now focussing on:

- completing high quality project examples;
- coming to grips with our product range (stone-carving, sculpture, design and construction of stone-walls, refurbishing of old stone dwellings, stonewalling courses and consultancy);
- defining our market as in the Office of Public Works, County Council, architects, builders, private individuals, and educational and religious institutions;
- costing and pricing structures;
- promotional materials and techniques; and,

- devising a company format/business structure (co-op / private etc).

Lessons and Recommendations

This project is innovative in the sense that it is rooted in the indigenous culture of the Gaeltacht. It broadens the definition of indigenous resources: these resources can include music, language, dance, crafts, folklore, mythology, pilgrimages as well as the more traditionally accepted ones such as land, sea, bogs and environment.

Ag Tógáil ár bPobail provides an enterprise model for replication in other rural areas; but in accepting that other future enterprise projects may not be as well resourced, we must get as close as possible to a streamlined model that could be used effectively.

The project must be successful given the fact that local enterprise development is essential to the survival of our communities. It is hoped that FÁS in particular would adopt strategies similar to this in that an examination / audit of local resources would be undertaken with a view to provide training leading to enterprise.

It is also an objective that core modules could be incorporated into vocational education both at second and adult levels of education.

It would be hoped that development agencies such as IDA and Údarás na Gaeltachta would undertake such programmes in association with FÁS, County Enterprise Boards and cross-border funding agencies.

There are strong indicators that the project is successful, albeit with the caveat that setting up any business is full of pitfalls and only as good as the planning and the individual / individuals involved. So far:

- it has attracted strong media attention;

- Ag Tógáil ár bPobail participated in a local Ideal Homes Exhibition and the response was excellent in the attention and interest displayed;
- it already has six customers with contracts on offer; and,
- the participants in the project are giving it 100 per cent commitment.

The key message that we want to give policy makers at national and EU levels is that investment in specific training for enterprise, particularly enterprise that is rooted in our culture, is a cost-effective method of strengthening the rural economy.

The Caravan Repair and Fire Safety Project

Edward Rispin

Navan Travellers Workshop is a limited company with charitable status. Its aim is to promote Traveller culture, education and enterprise. It was formed in 1995 and it currently employs 44 part-time people and 12 full-time people.

Over the years, Navan Travellers Workshop had identified a niche in the market particularly in the area of caravan repair with an emphasis on fire safety because of the number of fatalities in caravans over the years. The Integra project was based on this idea. It had two main objectives: the provision of quality accredited training related to caravan repair and fire safety; and the establishment of an enterprise providing services in these areas.

Main Features of the Integra Project

Like many other projects we did not start until April because we did not get the funding. I was taken on in April 1996. At that time we set about recruiting our participants. There are 100 Traveller families in the Meath area and we sent out applications to all of these. We got 14 back. We selected six from the 14. Following that we ran a two-week induction programme. During this the participants trashed out exactly what the programme was about, what their goals were, and what their involvement would be. At the end of this they signed an contract which gave it more clout and gave it more responsibility from their point of view: they were getting involved with something that was legitimate and real.

After the induction period we received a 13 week training programme from FÁS. This was a hands-on training programme. It covered the main skills necessary for caravan repair including carpentry, electrical work, welding, tiling, glazing and so on. From January 1997 we had one full-time tutor, one part-time tutor and we contracted external input where necessary.

Our training methodologies are similar to the Scottish Educational Training Centres. They are actually colleges with some similarity to the VECs here, except there would be a couple of thousand in their colleges. They provide accreditation under a system known as SCOTVEC. The advantage of this from our point of view is that our participants go through training that has a totally practical slant. Also, when they are finished their training they can transfer to colleges, so the training that they have does not stop, they can develop, move on to the next step.

The places where we have received accreditation from are:

- the 13 week training foundation skills – FÁS / City and Guilds;
- a welding certificate – FÁS;
- fire safety training – Dublin Fire Brigade Training Centre;
- the overall certificate for restoration and repair of transport vehicles – The Open College Network (a subsidiary of the University of Ulster);
- certificate for renovation and repair of transport vehicles – our European partnership (one is a college, one an educational centre, and the other is an educational department).

The participants also receive certificates for basic computing, start your own business and basic accounts from the VEC. One thing that I am proud of is that we have one participant who is currently on a diploma course with University College Cork in Social Integration and Enterprise.

The training was innovative in that it was practical hands-on training that was suitable to the people involved. It was not a classroom situation. Linked to the training there was a weekly review by the participants of the work that they had done and of

the learning that they acquired. There was also a weekly review by the tutor of what the tutor taught and what the students should have learned. There were monthly assessments of student progress and there was project work.

Project work was a way of assessing how people were getting on. For example, one of the participants is 34 years of age. He was in school for a couple of months in his life. When he started on the project he could not read a measuring tape. Three weeks ago he had finished work on drawings for a kitchen unit. He has actually built the kitchen unit from scratch and it is as good a kitchen unit as you will get anywhere in the country. That is the kind of quality of work that has resulted from the project work - and you can see it in the person, his confidence, his ability, you can see that he has developed as a result of that.

With regard to fire training, the participants have received training in fire safety and fire prevention. There were two main results from that:

- the caravan repair work that participants carry out will be to the highest fire safety standards available; and,
- at the moment, participants are designing a fire safety advice package which they will offer to halting sites throughout the country which will have slides and an actual video of how fire starts, how to prevent fire, and fire safety.

The enterprise development is very innovative. It is practical in that, before the end of the project in early 1998, a co-operative company will be set up which will be owned and run by the participants. Considering that they are members of the Travelling community this is going to be very innovative. The company will tackle the unemployment problem in the Travelling community, but it will also allow participants to move from the Traveller economy into the mainstream economy without losing their identity. They will be still working in an area that is familiar to them but they will be working in the mainstream, they will be working for the general public.

Transnational Activities

We have got three transnational partners (Scottish, Spanish and German). We found the transnational experience very beneficial. There were two main goals of the transnational aspect of the project. The first one was the exchange of participants, where our participants had the opportunity to go to different countries, experience the cultures but also experience that maybe other people would not exclude you as quickly as the Irish would. I remember walking down a street to a pub one night and one of the lads says to the other "*it's great, we can go to any pub or any hotel and it does not matter, we won't get kicked out*" and it just kicked home to me that other cultures, while they may not be very positive, are not as negative as we are towards people.

The other area was a training manual. We designed and delivered a common training manual for a new profession that we are trying to get off the ground. That is, the restoration and renovation of transport vehicles which could be cars, boats, caravans, trains, etc. We feel that this is an area, particularly the renovation of old transport vehicles, that could provide employment.

Enterprise Development: The Story So Far

With regard to enterprise development in the project, we have identified the services that we are going to offer. There are a fair few of them, but the main ones are going to be:

- caravan repair;
- caravan sales;
- caravan haulage;
- caravan inspections;
- halting-site maintenance; and,
- fire safety advice.

We feel that that there is sufficient work in these areas to build a sustainable enterprise, not in the near future, but definitely in the future. To this end, we are developing a customer base – something we have been doing since the beginning - and we have strong links at the moment with statutory bodies, voluntary

bodies, Travellers who are potential customers of ours and the general public.

We are currently having meetings with FÁS to start up a feasibility study on the viability of the enterprise and we feel that this will be taking place within the next eight to ten weeks. We did a little in-house research ourselves on competitors. Also, we did a feasibility projection and there is no doubt we will be in the social economy for the first year. That means that we won't survive on trading income. We will need support and that is why we are working with FÁS in that area.

We only stumbled across people that proved to be very beneficial to us - The Co-Operative Development Society - a company that helps people who are setting up co-ops. They were offering a training programme to somebody I know and I just read about it and phoned up. They have been a great source of information and they then put me in touch with the Irish Trade Union Trust, who are again a great source of advice from a legal point of view. They are very much legally minded in the setting up of co-ops and this was very beneficial for us.

Lessons Learned

There are a lot of lessons that I think we all learned from the project. For me communication was the big issue at national and international levels. With regard to the international level there were language and cultural difficulties to be overcome. However, we have now built a strong relationship with our transnational partners and we feel that that is fruitful and may become productive in the future in some shape or form.

At national level we have had the experience of dealing with two agencies operating in the area of providing support to enterprise. One said that "*we will not get involved with you because you are involved with another agency*". Both of them are there to help support employment. We are an ideal candidate for that. My view is that there is a need to for more effective communication, between the people and the agencies that provide support. The

agencies should talk to each other more, communicate, and maybe have a common dedication towards the creation of employment.

Another issue is that people who are socially excluded are excluded from access to information, particularly people that have literacy problems. From my experience with the people that I work with, with regard to filling out a form they would come to me – how do you do this, how do you do that. There is a need for more recognition of this problem and more support in this area.

The project is very innovative because it is going to develop a company that will allow Travellers in the Traveller economy to move into the mainstream not being effected. In other words, they do not have to change their identity, they do not have to change their culture, they can go in there and offer a professional service at a keen price the same as any other competitor except the Travellers. We have also developed strong links, as I have said before, on a local and national level with bodies such as County Councils, Health Boards, St. Vincent De Paul, Cross Care. We have built strong links with all these and we are in negotiations at the moment with Meath County Council to get the maintenance contracts for the bays in Meath. They are looking favourably at this but, as yet, they have not said yes.

I feel there is an important demonstration effect in our project. We are in the process of setting up a company that will show other Travellers that enterprise is not an alien concept. After all, it is what they have been doing all of their lives. Traditionally Travellers would make, buy and sell stuff, so that is in-bred in them and this enterprise may show Travellers that they can do it as well, it is not an alien concept to them. It will also show settled people that not all Travellers can be branded with the same iron, in other words, the general belief that all Travellers are not trustworthy. This project will show that the five remaining participants have the ability and will give a professional service which will be the same as any other agency out there.

The training methodologies that we used could be used in the mainstream. In other words, there is a need for a more practical

orientation in training programmes in order to make them attractive to people who have fallen out of the educational net. There are a lot of people that slip through the educational net, not because of their lack of ability to do things but because of their lack of ability to fit into the academic scenario that we have at the moment.

I firmly believe that projects should not be dropped after two years. I think that if a project is viable there should be a weaning period. It is very hard to expect a project to train a number of people, set up an enterprise and have it all going within two years. I think that there should be a winding down period. I don't mean big funding, but I do mean funding that will help the company to start up after the second year. I think that two years is a limited period.

Finally, I would also like to highlight a point about community projects. Navan Travellers Workshop is a voluntary organisation. It has no money of its own and we have to come up with £61,000 matching funding. We have done that, but by scraping and borrowing. It has not been easy and I think that this should be an area that should be highlighted. If it is a voluntary organisation then it needs maybe more support.

4

Building Bridges to Employment

The TRAMLINES Project

Donnacadh Hurley

TRAMLINES is an innovative and highly ambitious project being run by the Ballymun Job Centre. The project - which is funded under Integra - started in January, 1996 and will end in December, 1997. It is giving 25 unemployed people a chance to become high level computer professionals through "leap-frogging" of skills.

TRAMLINES is based in Ballymun which has a population of around 18,000 people and is one of the most disadvantaged areas of Ireland. By the mid 80s, local research estimated that 65 per cent of the labour force was unemployed, 74 per cent of families were dependant on social welfare, and about 40 per cent of households with children were headed by lone parents. In the mid-80s Ballymun had a very low level of formal mainstream educational attainment and the worst uptake of state-sponsored training in the country. There was a pervasively negative attitude to school and training throughout the community.

The Ballymun Job Centre was set up by local people in 1986 as a community response to this crisis. Since then we have operated a placement and enterprise support programme with significant success. We have placed 3,419 people in employment through our placement service which is availed of by employers across North Dublin. In collaboration with the Ballymun Partnership, we have assisted the set-up of numerous businesses - 79 of which are now firmly established. We have also established companies under our direct management and have been involved in various other employment-related initiatives.

Since the beginning of the 1990s things have begun to improve somewhat in Ballymun. Between January 1993 and October 1997

we have, for example, recorded a 29 per cent fall in the numbers of people recorded as unemployed. This is one of the fastest falling unemployment rates in the country. Recent local estimates calculate unemployment at around 30 to 35 per cent of the active labour force.

In the increasingly sophisticated and internationalised Irish economy it is now a necessity to have a good education or training to acquire even the most basic job. The Ballymun Job Centre has recognised this for some time and now allocates substantial energy and resources to enhancing the educational and training level of the Ballymun labour force. In the last two years, in conjunction with local training and education bodies, we have initiated 28 innovative training programmes for unemployed people in our area. TRAMLINES is the most ambitious of these and is unique in terms of the level of training provided.

TRAMLINES: The Project

TRAMLINES has as its immediate objectives:

- the training of 25 unemployed people to professional levels;
- assisting all 25 people to find suitable employment and;
- the establishment of a Ballymun-based commercial computer company.

The unusual element of the programme is the level of qualification and career aimed at. We expect all 25 people to enter a well paid professional career after TRAMLINES. After 20 months of the programme, all 25 trainees are progressing well and we are confident of achieving 100 per cent placement success.

At a deeper level the objective is to stimulate a dynamic which will make Ballymun a centre of computing excellence with substantial numbers of people finding good careers in this industry.[1]

[1] TRAMLINES aroused such exceptional interest in high quality and ambitious computer training in Ballymun that the Ballymun Job Centre was able to work with the nearby Whitehall House Vocational College (CDVEC) to establish 2 further advanced computer training courses under VTOS for a further 34 previously long-

TRAMLINES commenced in January 1996 with two years secured funding from EMPLOYMENT-Integra). FÁS, through a Special CE commenced assistance in July 1996 and Microsoft subsequently came on board with substantial support in terms of software, courseware, exam vouchers and general advice. IBM have also assisted the programme through some capital and software contributions and general support. The core of the programme involves intensive full-time training in our dedicated training facility in the heart of Ballymun. A six week Preparatory Term involving "introduction to computers", "team building", "basic word processing", "typing" and "personal development" modules led directly into a term concentrating on the acquisition of the first Microsoft Professional Certification. Subsequent terms address further Microsoft Certifications, wider knowledge of computer software, work experience, personal development (communications skills, assertiveness training, detailed career analysis etc.), business training, community services and the establishment of our new company.

The core qualifications being sought are the Microsoft Professional Certifications (MPC).[2] At the time of writing (November, 1997) all 25 trainees are Microsoft Certified Professionals. Twenty-five have passed the certification exam in Word 6.0, 21 trainees have become Microsoft Certified Product Specialists (Windows 95), eight are Microsoft Certified Trainers (with up to 7 more expected in the next month). The passing of these exams is a major milestone and strongly confirms the capacity of long-term unemployed people to acquire very high level qualifications[3]. The trainees have recently begun seeking

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term unemployed people. These courses, called Online I and Online II have already seen 28 of these people pass their first Microsoft Professional Certification exam. The remaining 6 are expected to pass next week.

[2] Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT), Microsoft Certified Product Specialist (MCPS), Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) and Microsoft Certified Solutions Developer (MCSD). The MCT qualification requires passing a high level test in one of the Microsoft applications and a trainer assessment test. MCPS requires passing exams in at least one operating system and one application. MCSE and MCSD require a series of up to 5 further exams in network and programming packages.

[3] The full MCSD or MCSE certification will not be achieved by all participants. Those who do not pass all the necessary exams necessary will continue study

employment. To date nine have secured written contracts with external employers, six will be employed by the new TR@MLINES Ltd. and all of the remaining 10 are attending interviews and will be employed in the new year.

Training the Trainers

TRAMLINES is very much about self-help, so it was essential that the programme be driven by local people. Therefore, we chose three locals from an open competition to be the trainers. With the help of a Microsoft Approved training company - WorkStations Training Ltd - the trainers started their training on January 2nd 1996. All three have already achieved very high level Microsoft Certifications. The central idea is that they keep ahead of the trainees, and be responsible for the core training programme. Their training input has been complemented by a range of external expertise, either paid or donated by supportive organisations.

Selection of Trainees

The Ballymun Job Centre advertised the TRAMLINES programme by way of a leaflet drop to every household in Ballymun in January, 1996. We received an unprecedented response. Four hundred and ten people contacted our office seeking a place. We invited 120 formal applications and decided to interview 116 of these. Our selection criteria were very simple. The person had to:

1. be over 18, unemployed and from Ballymun,
2. be willing to give exceptional commitment, and
3. achieve a certain level in (non-computer based) aptitude tests.

All 116 people invited for interview turned up (also unprecedented!). Ninety were given a first round of aptitude tests and 36 a second round.

within their expected employment. Thus, for example, under Tramlines it requires 7 exams to become a MCSE. Some of the trainees will attempt their 5^{th}, 6^{th} or 7^{th} exam while employed during 1998.

Profile of the Trainees

All but one of the trainees were unemployed at the time of selection - the exception was a part-time shop assistant. All bar five of the trainees were long term unemployed. Their average age was 23 (ranging from 19 to 40) and all had limited experiences with schooling or training and had very little chance of a high paid or professional career. Most of the trainees had no or very little exposure to computers at any level. None had studied computers or worked in this field to any significant level.

Professional Certifications and a Career for the Unemployed

Tramlines shows that long-term unemployed people can acquire highly marketable skills with a carefully designed and properly resourced training programme. In our case the Microsoft Certifications are a central plank in this process.

These certifications were designed for computer professionals to develop their knowledge of some of the leading software packages in a manner which is very pragmatic and business-focused. The certifications have substantial currency and are a major asset for computer professionals for career enhancement. The certifications have the great benefit of being accessible without preconditions such as previous educational qualifications, membership of certain groups etc. As exams can be scheduled almost on demand, the flexibility of timing permits important accessibility and flexibility in time tabling[4] which does not exist for most other educational qualifications.

Other Computer Training

The focus of TRAMLINES is on acquiring Professional Computer Certifications. It is also necessary when preparing the trainees for work to have a wider knowledge and competency in computing. Thus, a range of training is undertaken beyond the Microsoft Certifications. This includes Internet training, multimedia training, graphics, etc. These have mostly entailed short courses delivered by external experts or by transnational partners.

[4] Exams can be scheduled to meet the needs of the trainees. Furthermore, repeat exams can be sat almost immediately when appropriate.

This wider computer training is aimed at giving the trainees a broad range of knowledge and experience when they set out on their professional careers. These parallel training activities may also open up avenues of interest or opportunity for certain trainees and those wishing to pursue one of these lines more fully will be supported.

Non-Computer Training

An unemployed person with a limited education/training and work record, who only acquires a technical training will not have acquired the full set of attributes necessary to take up a professional career. It is essential therefore, to have a balanced approach to the personal and professional development of the trainees.

Personal and Professional Development: In order to provide a foundation for the personal and professional confidence to hold down a professional career in a competitive market we have placed great emphasis on personal development including: Communications Skills; Public Speaking; Trainer's Training; Personal Career Analysis; and, Job Seeking Skills.

Work Experience: We arranged two periods of work experience for the trainees. The first, for a week, took place in March '97. The second took up the month of August. The latter confirmed all the trainees of their potential careers and several of the trainees will be working with these companies when the course is finished. All returned more confident of finding good employment and being able to hold their own in a professional environment.

We also have a programme of community service, which entails a range of support and training services being provided to local organisations by our trainees. Thus, for example, 19 of the trainees have offered or are offering part-time training programmes.

Learning from TRAMLINES: Two Key Issues - Personal Finance and Pedagogy

The provision of a purely skills training programme is not enough to help unemployed people into a career. Two critical issues which must be addressed are personal finance and an appropriate pedagogical environment and process.

Personal Finance

People from "better off" families and supportive home environments, (where education and training is highly valued and the necessary costs involved can be supported), generally have higher aspirations and can make good use of access to normal education/training facilities. This is not always the case for people from poor areas like Ballymun. There are weak family reserves of capital and there exists, in many cases by necessity, a short-term attitude to finance and capital accumulation. It is therefore essential to assure a flow of financial support to adults in full-time training/education. Furthermore, in the case of TRAMLINES, the average age of the trainees is now 24 and nearly half the trainees have dependant children. People cannot be expected to take on full-time training over two years in these circumstances. The Ballymun Job Centre had secured adequate funds for training allowances which overcomes this barrier.

Pedagogy

There are two aspects of pedagogy which we would like to draw attention to.

1. **Pedagogical Environment:** It is not enough to place most previously long-term unemployed people in a standard learning environment - "here are the books, there's the computer and your class schedule is as follows..." People with negative experiences of education and often low levels of home support for their efforts to study need more. That is why we have a programme of intensive individual monitoring of trainees, a highly pedantic and controlled training methodology in the early phase (until the trainees gain a sense of confidence sufficient to undertake self-study), and a range of modules which focus on wider

personal and professional development (communications skills, work experience, etc.). We have consciously developed a team spirit involving both staff and trainees, and to date there has been no dissipation of commitment. All of the trainees undertake extra study at home and our attendance records are good.

2. **Pedagogical Process - Computers and Confidence-Building:** Computers, especially with the modern Windows interface, have the potential to be very affirming and thus confidence building. People with a bad experience of education often do not have a lot of confidence in their ability to learn. But, if they are taught something intuitively comprehensible on a computer and can see that they can produce a "result" from applying themselves to it, then they gain confidence. This is why we introduced a step-by-step style of teaching with regular tests and practical exercises. These were designed not only to judge but to *confirm* progress.

Through this process we have created a level of confidence in our trainees such that most of them are now assured enough to study on a similar basis to third level college students. Computers no longer hold any fear and their enthusiasm to learn has been established.

The Theatrical Crafts and Production Skills Training Programme

Robbie McDonald

I trained as a sculptor and have been working in arts administration for about the last 10 to 15 years. During that time I became familiar with the concerns that had been raised by organisations such as CAFÉ (Creative Activity for Everyone): for example, the question of access and participation in the arts and the issue of a social audit in the arts.

Over the past decade there has been a great growth in arts activity, but there is a general consensus that not everyone is getting access to the great cultural explosion that is taking place. Certainly there are not a lot of people coming from disadvantaged areas or backgrounds getting employment in the sector. It was this that we set out to address in the Theatrical Crafts and Productions Skills Training Programme at the Firkin Crane Centre.

Programme Design and Delivery

The Firkin Crane Centre was originally the "Butter Market". It was a circular building where butter used to be weighed and exported all over the world. But that industry declined. In the last twenty years, through European support and fund-raising, the building was converted into a theatre geared towards the needs of a dance company. The Firkin Crane Centre now is a 250-seat theatre with a smaller theatre, dance rooms, mirror rooms. However, at the time I started work there, it was underused and not contributing its full potential to the development of the arts in Cork City. It certainly was not playing a role in the development of Shandon – where it is located - as a cultural quarter.

The brief that I got was to develop the venue into a viable arts venue and to develop some activities that would make it function as a part of a cultural quarter and generate other kinds of economic activity there. From my knowledge of the theatre generally, and particularly in Cork where we have a festival city - a jazz festival, a folk festival, a film festival, a choral festival, you name it we have festivals going nearly every season of the year – I was aware of the employment potential of the entertainment sector and also of the need for skilled personnel in the sector. In particular, I was aware from my colleagues in the theatre and events production sector that there was a lack of personnel to service these areas. We sat down and agreed to identify the gaps that needed to be filled in the theatre sector in Cork City. The gaps we identified included personnel to handle lighting and sound, to produce good quality sets, to be available to run a show. These are the skills that are required to sustain any theatre, festival, opera house, folk festival, or any of the events that were taking place in the city.

What we did next was we identified a number of key actors (i.e., full-time professional stage managers, production managers) who operated mainly in and around the Cork area, but who also operated in other parts of the country. I got them to agree to design a series of modules that would give unemployed people with very little or maybe some interest in theatre the skills to undertake work in the areas in which we identified shortages of personnel. The profile of the people we thought the course would be of interest to were people who may have done some amateur drama work or that odd school show but who would not really be up to speed with the needs of the professional sector from the point of view of getting employment in it.

The course was advertised widely using radio, written material and by word of mouth. We interviewed 30 people and in the end selected 10 to participate. The course involved using Community Employment to cover participant payments and as matching funds. All participants were over 21 years of age and, all but one, was long-term unemployed.

Over a period of two years we have designed and delivered a series of modules on lighting, sound, set construction, stage management, running a show, rapping up after a show, taking down a show and moving it on to the next venue. We delivered this in the Firkin Crane. As we had access to other theatres in the city, the participants actually had the benefit of setting up shows before the event happened. They also attended shows as crew so that they could see what was happening during and after shows. Additional input included personal development, literacy and numeracy tuition, computer skills, basic first aid, being in business, and basic arts administration.

There was a strong practical orientation to the course. We gave participants a number of test runs and then gradually we said to them, "now it's your turn to do it on your own". The work we set for participants is quite demanding and it takes a lot of confidence to do it. But because we gradually introduced them into the sector and gradually built up their confidences in handling the various aspects of putting on a show, most became quite capable.

We are now in the last quarter of the training programme. During the next few months we will be focusing on developing the individual portfolios of the participants. We are also encouraging them to look at their own expertise and where it fits into employment in the sector. We will assist them build on their interests and strengths through work placements over the remaining months of the project: we have arrangements that all participants will be obtain placements. They will stay in these for probably three months.

Some of the participants have expressed an interest in touring. We had approaches from some of the companies who are touring around Ireland and we are going to look at this further because it is a more difficult arena to work in. The main focus, however, is to sustain participants in the environment for at least another year. Hopefully, at that stage, they will have made such an impression and become so invaluable in their placements that they will be taken on either on a full-time basis or, which is the norm in our sector, on a contract basis.

Was it a Successful Project?

I believe that the success of the project is evident in the confidence acquired by the participants. The *real* experience they gained contributed enormously to their confidence: if you ever worked in theatre, the excitement, the energy and the dynamic of actually running a show really gives people a sense of their own capacity, it builds up their awareness and confidence to take on issues that they would not have gone near before. If you run a show and it works, there is great satisfaction in that.

The programme also had a tremendous capacity building effect on the organisation. It enabled us to attract in a whole range of events. RTE did *Questions and Answers*, which is a tremendous event to have in the venue. The trainees got an opportunity to work with RTE, which is a very high pressure, high-tech operation. So they got a chance to work on that, they saw how it operated. It raised the profile of the venue to a level now where we are in demand because we have a very high quality tech management system in the building. We will encourage companies to come in and we will encourage our trainees to work on the gigs we get. Some of them will go on tour. So in that sense, the capacity of the venue has improved greatly.

Lessons Learned

What made the training particularly successful was that we delivered it as much as possible in real working environments and got key professionals in the sector to design and actually deliver the training. In addition because of the key professionals involved (one of them runs the Dublin Theatre Festival, the other is in Belfast at the moment running the Queens Festival in Belfast, the production end of it) we also got participants access to events outside their own city. This opened up their vista. They began to realise that there are other people like them in Belfast, in Dublin, who are involved in training in the arts and entertainment sector. That gave them a sense that there were job opportunities outside the Cork area and that there was a whole range of festivals and events out there that needed the skills they were learning.

What has this project got to say to policy makers? First of all, there is major growth in the entertainment industry. People have a lot more money in their pockets, they are working harder and they are going out and enjoying themselves. They are looking for high quality entertainment. If you look at any entertainment event, be it a political party conference, be it a football match, be it a theatre show, be it a rock and roll show, there is a huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes. We have identified in that sector a demand for skilled personnel.

The turnover is extremely high in the entertainment industry. It is an area that is completely unregulated. Trying to regulate rock and roll is like trying to regulate the weather - it has its own dynamic character. People come in and they just take off and if you happen to be with a successful band you can change your career in a matter of two to three weeks. There is potential for unemployed people to enter this sector. We have made what progress can be made with a relatively small-scale demonstration project.

There is a need for more of the tailor-made training that we have done. This could be provided, not necessarily by Firkin Crane or other venues, but by mainstream agencies like FÁS working with the right approach and personnel. It is a very demanding sector and it is one that needs focused training with credibility in the sector. But working in the sector is very rewarding and it is a sector with job opportunities.

I know that in other parts of the entertainment industry there is also shortage of personnel. That shortage, I think, should be looked at. The training required to enter the sector is best delivered by those who work in the sector, preferably in a theatre or in the environment in which the performance actually happens. I think that it is more effective if it is delivered in that way.

It is very costly to deliver the training. We had quite a number of special inputs from lighting designers, sound engineers, very skilled set construction people and designers. This was expensive. They are the best in the business, but they will deliver good

quality training if they are asked to. They see it as providing them with skilled personnel, to enable them to get on with their work and maybe farm it out and get it done more effectively, more efficiently and assist their business.

The lesson we have learned is that there are gaps that need to be filled. It is quality, focussed employment related training that should be delivered along the lines that I have described. There are employment opportunities there and it is an opportunity that needs to be exploited by other agencies.

LUDO: An Interactive Training Initiative

Peter Lynch

The promoter of LUDO is Senior College Ballyfermot, a member of the City of Dublin VEC. Our central idea was based around developing a training programme for young disadvantaged people who had become interested in – even absorbed in or addicted to playing - computer games. The overall aim of the project was to develop career and training opportunities for these disadvantaged young people. Our approach consisted of setting up a training programme for a group of 25 young people from the target group and building links with the games industry.

Making LUDO Work

Bringing LUDO from an idea to an operational project involved quite a bit of work on a range of fronts. I will outline for you here some of the main features of this.

Establishing Links with the Games Industry: For the training to be grounded in the needs of the games industry and to develop its credibility we established an advisory group to the project with representation from companies in the games industry. This included representatives of computer games producers and retailers. The group, which also included VEC representatives, operated mainly on an informal basis: members were consulted individually and became involved in the project when and where required.

Target Group and Recruitment: The target group tends to be young men. This reflects the male dominated nature of the industry and the fact that it is mainly males who play the games. People who get into games tend to be educational under-achievers

or early school-leavers, but are very interested in the flashy visuals associated with computer games. So the central aim of the educational programme was to harness this energy on the part of the target group and to convert them from being consumers of leisure software into producers of leisure software.

The recruitment of participants was probably one of the most interesting challenges to the project. Where do you get young unemployed computer gamers? In a way they are not the easiest group of people to find. A lot of them would have Nintendo or Saga systems that you can buy second-hand for £50 to £60. It was hard to target them so we put advertisements in places that they might go, particularly Easons and HMV. We put a lot of ads in the arcade halls in Dublin and we also ran ads in the games column of the National Newspapers, which were again pretty helpful to us. It was important that we were able to target the exact group that we needed, otherwise we would be loosing out on a key objective of the project. About 150 people made enquiries and we received applications from about half this number. After interviewing 35 of these, 25 participants were selected.

Curriculum Development: Among the objectives of the programme was to develop a new curriculum suitable for the target group. We did this over a period of about three months. We were very conscious of the existing work done by Ballyfermot Senior College in computer animation and we sought to adapt the actual modules to suit the target group. Everything had to revolve around computer games to keep the participants interested and that was a big problem at the start. Over the first year we learnt a lot and we fine-tuned the course.

The core elements included sound, storyboarding, computer graphics and game analysis. Additional elements, included communications and French. The former was included as we recognised that many of the participants had poorly developed social and communication skills. The inclusion of French was not very popular with participants but we felt it was important for a number of reasons including the transnational nature of the project, the international nature of the games business and the

self-discipline of learning a language for trainees. We also included a regular slot, on Fridays, for fun activities and playing games.

Counselling was included as a support service to the course. This drew on the good counselling and support system already in place in Ballyfermot Senior College but it required that the personnel involved became familiar with a group of people that they were not used to dealing with in order to become aware of their needs.

In practice we integrated the training, education and counselling aspects of the course. We put these three together because, given the target group, you are not just training people, but you are also giving them basic educational skills and developing their social skills and confidence. Given the target group we felt it was particularly important to integrate communications and a counselling support into the course in order to make it effective.

Simulating Employment and Work Experience: This was another innovative aspect of the course. The first half of the course involved providing training in the curriculum I have outlined. During the second half we actually set up a mini company within the college and we ran it as an actual training company. This provided all participants with the experience of doing interviews for positions in the company and they also all got the chance to become team leaders for a period. It also gave them the experience of what a typical work environment is like, something the majority had never experienced.

Accreditation: This was provided by the City of Dublin VEC.

LUDO's Achievements

I think that LUDO is a success story. We took on 25 trainees and, apart from three that left early on in the project, 90 per cent were placed within two months of completing their training. More importantly, slightly over 50 per cent are now in full-time employment. As a lot of the work in multi-media, computer games and CD ROM areas tends to be contract work, we are very

pleased about that figure. Our curriculum is fully developed. LUDO has been mainstreamed by the College - it is now provided as a one-year certificate programme. Also, sponsorship was secured from IBM, which will allow us to develop the programme further.

Why was LUDO Successful?

There are a number of reasons for LUDO's success, in my view. For example, to speed things up and get the project going we took modules from existing animation courses. We took a lot of the programmes from Senior College Ballyfermot animation courses and adapted them to the group. We built on what was available, adapted it and added to it. This was the hook to get the guys in, it is the most visual of the subjects that we taught.

A very important aspect of developing programmes which work with disadvantage groups is developing the skills of the trainers involved. We were lucky in this respect, as all the trainers involved were computer gamers. This gave them something in common with the participants. It is a very important to have that link and to make it a more personal experience for the target group.

Another factor was building industry recognition of the value of the participants and of the course from an early stage. Again we were lucky in that Ballyfermot Senior College works closely with the games and animation industry. In the project we took it a further stage. We actually had them in from the very beginning and this was vital to the success of the project. As I said earlier, the way we did this was we formed an industry advisory group. That sounds very grandiose, but what it involved was ringing about 10 companies, getting them in at an early stage, talking to them, getting to know the people involved and letting them know what we were doing. For innovative programmes this is critical. If you are setting up a new programme and you are targeting industry and you go to them afterwards, forget it, it won't work. You have to have them in from day one and let them know what

you are doing. Let them look at your curriculum as well and take on board what suggestions that they have to make.

What Can we Learn From LUDO?

The big plus in the LUDO project was teaching IT skills. We taught a broad range of IT skills so that the people leaving our project could go into a lot of different areas. Essentially, we covered computer graphics, sound programming and communications. These enabled participants to get jobs. These skills are in huge demand in Ireland. Everybody is talking about the Celtic Tiger. Yet, there is a skill shortage in this area in Ireland right now. I was talking to multi-media and games companies during the week and what they are doing now is looking abroad to Eastern Europe for technicians. This is a big problem.

The project showed that finding ways of harnessing the energy of the target group is important. This is something that is core to innovative projects, not just our one. In this area, one of the most innovative aspects of LUDO was its training methodology. It was based firmly around developing computer games and incorporated a lot of project based work. It also incorporated new uses of technology. Last year we pioneered having well-known game designers from abroad talk to the participants and staff on-line. This was very interesting for us and for the participants. Through our sponsorship with IBM, this is an area that we want to develop further.

Because LUDO ran over two years and was part of Integra, I had about five or six meetings with other projects and I learnt a lot from these. I think that that is something that should be encouraged more, to learn from one another.

During the course of LUDO, the College learned to work even more closely with industry. It must be recognised that it is very important to get their financial support as well as their support and advice on matters related to the project.

There are also limitations to a two year project. It does actually fly by and you can only achieve so much and that is something that we learned. Some of the things that we wanted to achieve, we could not, mainly due to lack of time.

Finally, what are the lessons for policy makers? The bottom line is that the majority of participants are in jobs that they would be highly unlikely to have been employed in before the project. This was the result of one years intensive training, education and counselling tailored to the target group and the games sector. Like other Integra projects, this kind of result is only achievable because we worked closely with the participants and responded to their situation by teaching core educational skills as well as providing specialist training. The project shows that while LUDO is expensive (this arises from the range of inputs required to make a programme effective and also reflects the start-up and the transnational aspects) it is very cost effective when we take into account the benefits to the participants, the industry and the Irish economy.

5

Improving Labour Market Services

Making the Future Work

Freda Keeshan

Let me start by giving you a little background on Parents Alone Resource Centre (PARC). PARC was established in 1986, is based in Coolock, and is a community resource centre for lone parents living in the catchment area of the Northside Partnership. The Centre receives its core funding through participating in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affair's Community Development Programme.

The philosophy of the Centre encourages economic independence, assertiveness and the development of skills. This has been put into practise through the provision of a drop-in information, support and guidance service for lone parents, a range of development and training programmes and campaigning for policy and attitudinal change.

Before the current project PARC had been involved with three other projects funded by the EU Human Resource Initiatives. With the Northside Partnership, we were the promoters of a NOW project which focussed on accredited training in childcare and enterprise skills. In addition, we were a participant organisation in two Horizon/Disadvantaged projects promoted by the Combat Poverty Agency. The first centred on prevocational training for lone parents and the second explored the role of community arts in the context of community development.

The Rationale For *Making the Future Work*

Making the Future Work was developed because of an analysis of the needs of lone parents and a perceived gap in meeting those needs. There are a number of aspects to this analysis. First, there

is the level of social and economic disadvantage that lone parents experience. There is strong evidence of a link between lone parenthood and early school-leaving. A large dependence on social welfare leaves lone parents at a high risk of poverty. In terms of housing, lone parents are clustered in both public and private rented accommodation – 70 per cent of lone parents as compared to 18 per cent for the total population. Lone parent labour market participation rates are similar to those of married women, an overall rate of 29 per cent and 23.6 per cent at work. Lone parenthood carries additional financial costs such as childcare and sole responsibility for maintaining a household. Socially, lone parents carry the burden of parenting alone, can be socially isolated and suffer the stigma attached to their status. On the other hand, positive features include personal and financial independence, especially for those who have come from a difficult marriage.

Second, while policy for lone parents has moved in a labour market friendly direction – which is reflected in recent social welfare changes and the opening up of labour market programmes to certain categories of lone parents - we felt that, in the absence of accessible high quality information and support for lone parents, the effects of these initiatives would be limited.

Third, local agencies and groups whose target groups include lone parents had expressed concern that they were not meeting the needs of lone parents in their particular neighbourhoods.

Finally, in the context of a more labour market orientated policy move for lone parents, serious consideration of the issues and barriers to participation in the labour market was warranted.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of *Making the Future Work* was the integration of lone parents into the economic and social life of the catchment area of the Centre. The specific objectives were:

- provision of accurate information to lone parents in their own neighbourhoods on the range of options open to them in employment and second chance education opportunities;
- provision of a mentoring service to support lone parents;
- developing awareness among management and staff of local agencies of the rights, needs and issues for lone parents while at the same time facilitating them in developing and adapting their programmes to suit the needs of lone parents as part of their target group;
- serious consideration of policy issues in order to work towards removing barriers to participation of lone parents in the labour market.

There are many elements to the main actions of the project and I am going to briefly describe each action. Before I do, I would like to point out that the project is not exclusively a training programme, neither is it solely orientated to improving labour market services which is the theme of this workshop. Rather, it is a number of strands working alongside one another in order to achieve the overall aim. At local level, there are three main actions.

Firstly, **Training of Trainers**, to enhance the capacity of the Centre's staff to provide a quality service. This is particularly important in the community development context where staff often don't come from a professional background and may not have received accredited formal training although they have developed very valuable skills on the ground. Training in report writing, presentation skills and information technology was provided in workshop format. In addition, members of staff have undertaken accredited training courses in community leadership, women's studies, social exclusion and social enterprise.

The second main action, **Direct Work with Lone Parents**, consisted of three strands: an information pack, a support and training programme, and a mentoring service for lone parents. A lot of time was spent by the project team in the first half of 1996 researching and compiling the *Making the Future Work* Information Pack. The focus was on putting together a user-

friendly pack, which would be accessible and relevant to the needs of lone parents. The finished pack is approximately 60 A4 pages in length, comes in personalised folder format, and contains information and worksheets on the following range of topics: social welfare and tax; money management; childcare and parenting; identifying experience and skills; CV's and application forms; presentation and interview skills; education and training options.

The second strand, Returning to Work, consisted of ten two and a half-hour sessions. Each session focused on a topic from the information pack with additional sessions for group support and evaluation. Key features of the programme were:

- a community development holistic empowering model;
- guest inputs from individuals with specific expertise; and,
- visits by staff from Local Employment Services.

Ten programmes were provided during the course of the project. The majority of these were outreach courses. Therefore, recruitment of participants, childcare provision, etc. for the programmes was a joint effort, involving a close working relationship between Parents Alone and the local project.

In conjunction with the programme, we offered a one-to-one mentoring service to all participants. This was the third strand. The focus of this was to support participants in developing and implementing a personal action plan for moving on. All participants were first offered a one-hour appointment and could then access ongoing one-to-one support from the project team. Mentoring is still ongoing and will be until the end of the project.

The final action at local level involved **Working with Local Agencies and Groups.** These included:

- Employment Sub-Group of the Northside Partnership;
- Northside Local Employment Service Network;
- Employment Action - a project co-promoted by the Northside Partnership and the Northside Centre for the Unemployed; and,

- Five community based resource centres based in different parts of the catchment area.

Again, this action consisted of three strands.

First, formal presentations were made to the management and staff of these agencies. This presented a social and economic overview of the circumstances of lone parents, highlighted the issues and needs of lone parents both on a personal level and particularly in relation to the labour market, and outlined principles of good practice in working with lone parents. We then went on to discuss the experience of the particular agency, both positive and negative, in terms of their work with lone parents. And finally, looked at some actions which could be implemented jointly with the aim of developing service provision for lone parents.

The second strand consisted of the implementing the joint actions agreed on. These including the following:

- the project supporting other community based projects in developing and delivering their own programmes for lone parents and in obtaining funding for these programmes;
- the project providing placements and training for local information workers and employment service staff;
- PARC becoming an information point for the Local Employment Service Network and now as a representative on the board of the LESN ensuring a continuing focus on lone parents as part of the target group of the Local Employment Service.

Third, these local agencies together with local representatives from statutory agencies such as the VEC and the Department of Social, Community, and Family Affairs meet regularly with the project team to review progress and to continue the focus on service provision and policy issues for lone parents.

A brief word now about the work of the project at the policy level. We were part of a policy forum with three other EMPLOYMENT projects based in the Northside Partnership catchment area. The

focus of our work was on three specific areas: barriers to employment / self-employment for our targets groups; childcare; and mainstreaming. A seminar presenting the issues was held this year and a publication was produced. We were also involved with several other projects in the Integra strand and commissioned a research study around the theme of social integration of marginalised groups, a summary of which will soon be available for distribution.

At a transnational level, our main programme of work involved a bilateral partnership with a NOW project in Finland, who are delivering a vocational training programme for lone parents. We jointly commissioned a comparative study of economic activity amongst lone parents in Ireland and Finland. The starting point for this study was the different participation rates of lone parents in the labour market in both countries – 65 per cent of lone parents are in employment in Finland, the large majority full-time work (this figure stood at over 90 per cent in 1990, before the current economic recession), as against 28.6 per cent in Ireland. The premise of the study was that the social and policy context within which lone parents make decisions relating to labour market participation were critical factors in explaining this difference. The main differences between the two countries are:

- Finland has a comprehensive childcare strategy in place, a situation which throws into sharp relief the absence of such strategies in Ireland;
- Finland has a coherent set of policies targeted at the family, and the family includes a diversity of family forms, whereas moves to develop family policy have only recently been evidenced in Ireland;
- in Finland, lone parents are catered for within Finnish general measures, whereas in Ireland, lone parents are treated as a separate group;
- in Ireland, the social policy system relies on the traditional housewife model, whereas the Finnish form of gender contract is based on the idea of two autonomous individuals with essentially equal rights and who maintain themselves through

their own employment. Women expect to be employed and enter working life with the same orientation as men.

The point is that a relationship exists between the labour force participation rates of women and the degree of support in the state for the interests of women. In Finland there is a lot of support and in Ireland very little – women are still viewed as dependants in the tax / welfare systems and lone parents are the only group of women who are a target group in terms of labour market programmes.

What have we Achieved?

I am going to move onto outcomes now. I must say that our evaluator is currently very busy sending out questionnaires and scheduling interviews and that the formal evaluation report will not be available until early 1998. However, ongoing evaluation was undertaken by the project team throughout the life of the project. We also introduced a system of tracking participants – basically connecting with them at regular periods to offer ongoing support and to see how and to where they had moved on.

The information pack has proved to be a very valuable resource for participants in the Centre's regular information and advice service and is now used by other local agencies. Before the end of the project, in response to feedback, we intend to add two additional sections on housing and family law.

Over 100 lone parents participated in the programme. We had a very low drop out rate and a high take up of the mentoring service. Sixty per cent of the participants have progressed onto other activities and would identify the *Making the Future Work* programme as being critical in enabling them to begin to take control of the future direction of their lives. Our parameters for progression were pretty realistic and included, in addition to employment and education and training, Community Employment – accessing local employment and community based services – and coping more effectively with personal issues.

Outcomes in relation to work with local agencies, and if I might add, outcomes which will continue long after the lifetime of the project, include:

- raised awareness and knowledge within a range of local agencies around the issues for lone parents;
- development of a close working relationship between the Centre and other agencies;
- improved service provision and programmes for lone parents, particularly in other community based projects; and,
- increased uptake in the number of lone parents accessing existing labour market and community based services.

Success and Innovation

The factors which we consider have contributed to the success of the project are:

- a partnership approach and an emphasis on building links, locally, but also nationally and internationally;
- a programme which offered a broad and holistic range of supports – based on the premise that exclusion is experienced not only in terms of the labour market, but also in relation to the democratic and legal systems, family and community systems. Bad health and poor housing are also key features of social exclusion;
- the capacity to be flexible – flexible in terms of responding to needs, designing and implementing programmes, changing approaches and strategies that are not proving to be very effective;
- finally, empowering methods and attitudes, a focus on one-parent families as families with potential as opposed to families with problems.

There were two key challenges for the project.

The first was recruitment, particularly in relation to young lone parents, who are quite complex in terms of their needs and accessibility. While this caused an impediment at first, the

realisation that some participants are less willing and less able than others to take the step to attend a group session led to the project switching to a one-to-one mentoring approach on an outreach basis in two neighbourhoods. This strategy which was seen as complimentary to the original programme proved to be successful.

The second challenge was the limitations of the partnership approach adopted at local level. While the programme of work with these agencies was the sole agenda for the project, it was a small part of an extensive workload for other groups. The active participation / commitment of other agencies to a large extent depended on their own stage of development and how they prioritised their work with lone parents. The result was that local agencies engaged with the project to varying degrees.

What is innovative about the project, how does it differ from existing policy?

- the programme and pack were tailor made to suit the needs of lone parents in their dual role as parents and breadwinner;
- support with childcare facilities and childcare costs were provided for participants;
- lone parents were targeted in their own neighbourhoods;
- a combination of group programme and one-to-one support; and,
- concurrent work with lone parents on the ground and with service providers.

What are the Lessons for Practice and Policy?

In terms of practice, and when I say practice, I am talking about recommendations for existing provision, I want to make three key points. First, the people we work with need one-to-one personal supports in order to deal with personal barriers that are blocking their way (e.g., lack of confidence, lack of contacts, lack of role models, etc.). It needs to be recognised by statutory agencies that offering training and education opportunities without essential personal supports will fail.

Secondly, current programmes need to recognise the multifaceted experience of exclusion and find integrated ways of responding to each individual's varied needs. I will give you an example of what I mean. Housing was a crucial issue for participants who availed of mentoring on the *Making the Future Work* Programme. Many lone parents were living in highly unsatisfactory situations – mainly inadequate and insecure expensive private rented accommodation or alternatively, living with their family of origin, often overcrowded with issues around boundaries in relation to the parenting role. These women could not focus on labour market issues when their basic rights to secure housing were not being met by the state and its agencies.

Finally, there is a need to provide flexible training at times and in modules which allow for greater participation by lone parents. An 8.30am start is inaccessible to anyone with childcare responsibilities. Training programmes need to have in-built childcare supports.

In terms of policy, and I want to point out that these comments are based on many years experience of working with lone parents on the ground, the key issues are:

- a national childcare policy which would increase supply of childcare, subsidise demand in the sense that low income persons should be supported and which would regulate quality. Until such a policy is implemented, labour market prospects for women in general and lone parents in particular will be restricted;
- poverty traps in the current tax / welfare system need to be eliminated. For example, because lone parents rely heavily on the private rented housing sector, rent allowances contain a poverty trap because of the 100 per cent withdrawal rate against earned income. A phased withdrawal of rent allowances over a transition period would improve incentives for lone parents in the transition into employment;
- the age limit for training and employment interventions means that younger lone parents, often early school-leavers, are receiving little or no attention in labour market / training

policy. Schools need to be developing programmes for young mothers, that are innovative, flexible and incorporate childcare supports.

- training or employment supports are of themselves unlikely to improve job prospects of participants unless they are followed by progression to more advanced schemes, which have better linkages with the labour market. What is needed are paths that allow lone parents to progress through a series of programmes tailored to their particular needs with the long term objective of securing sustainable employment;
- in the long term, a rationale for policies and measures for lone parents in the context of policies for all families needs to be developed. Elements of such a move would be to break the link between welfare status and child income support and to individualise welfare payments between men and women. The current system can result in unhelpful divisions between different family types.

The Pathways Project

Martin Walters

The Pathways Project is an initiative of the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (CDVEC). Its central aim is the social and educational reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners.

The Rationale for *Pathways*

The main reasons for setting up the project were as follows.

1. The vast majority of prisoners come from lower social class backgrounds with low levels of educational attainment, vocational skills and limited experience of employment. A study by Paul O'Mahony in 1993 found that 57 per cent of offenders had dropped out of school before they were 15 years old and only 14 per cent had completed an apprenticeship or vocational training. The study also found that 80 per cent had been unemployed prior to their current imprisonment. There is widespread evidence of a significant literacy problem among prisoners (e.g., a study in Wheatfield prison found that 61 per cent of prisoners said that they had problems with reading, writing or spelling since leaving school).

2. The CDVEC currently provides educational programmes in all the Dublin prisons, but a number of factors limit prisoners' access to provision. These include:

   a) the logistics of maintaining the prison regime (e.g., work detail, transfer, early release);
   b) the debilitating effect of imprisonment on prisoners; and,

c) segregation of specific categories of prisoners (e.g., sex offenders and those in remand).

3. Significant difficulties were being experienced by prisoners in accessing mainstream education/training and employment on release. Contributing to this was the lack of co-ordination between educational/training provision within prison and provision available to ex-prisoners on the outside. There were very few mechanisms to advise and guide ex-prisoners to formal training, educational provision and employment opportunities.

Objectives and Actions

As a response to the above, the project was formulated and established in January 1st 1996. It had two main objectives:

- to enhance and improve existing educational provision in prisons; and,
- to provide a socio-educational guidance and support mechanism for ex-prisoners on release.

The specific actions of the project were as follows:

- to provide two Open Learning Centres in Wheatfield and Mountjoy prisons to complement and expand existing programmes and increase prisoners' access to education;
- to pilot and develop, through the integrated use of new information technology, educational programmes and initiatives relevant to the target group;
- to establish Pre-release Courses in each of the main Dublin prisons and prepare prisoners for release;
- to establish a Post-release Learning Centre which will provide a support link between the educational and guidance services provided by Education Units in prison (e.g. Pre-release Courses) and education, training and employment offered in the wider community; and,

- to develop, in conjunction with the CDVEC Psychological Service, a comprehensive assessment and guidance process for ex-prisoners.

The Open Learning Centres

The two Open Learning Centres (OLC) in Wheatfield and Mountjoy prisons are fully operational and located in the Education Units in the respective prisons. They are open Monday to Friday daily and for four evenings a week. Each OLC has been equipped with computers, printers, TVs, audio equipment, educational computer software, audio tapes, videos and print material. The OLCs are staffed by prison education staff acting as facilitators and a Co-Ordinator has been appointed for each OLC.

The Centres cater for a range of educational levels from basic literary to Open University trainees, as do the resource materials available in them. Literacy students have particularly benefited and their educational participation rates have increased since the opening of the centres. In Wheatfield, 50 per cent of trainees using the OLC have little formal education, 31 per cent being basic literacy students.

Since it opened in October 1996 the OLC in Mountjoy has registered 97 trainees and the one in Wheatfield, 236 trainees. In Mountjoy 42 trainees, who have attended the centre have either been released, transferred or dropped out. The corresponding figure in Wheatfield is 136.

Both OLCs have enhanced and improved existing educational provision in prisons by providing access to independent learning, increasing the numbers attending each Education Unit, enabling trainees to enhance their studying on other Courses, increasing their skill levels, and enabling them to increase their confidence and self-esteem. This also prepares them for release and increases their chances of obtaining access to education/training and employment opportunities. A significant number of trainees who have used the OLCs have also attended the Post-release Centre.

Both OLCs have now fulfilled the objectives of the project and have become mainstreamed as an integral part of their respective Education Unit.

New Educational Resources

Three educational interactive multi-media programmes have been developed and produced in print form and are in the process of being transferred into CD-ROM format. This process will be completed by the end of the month.
The three programmes are as follows:

- Literacy Package: three readers at different levels of literacy to be presented as a package - CD-ROM, booklets and audio-tapes to accompany each reader;
- Toraíocht an Toire Oir: an interactive reader in Irish to be presented in CD-ROM format with accompanying notes; and,
- Electricity Today: - a three-module programme on basic electricity to be presented in CD-ROM format with accompanying notes.

The next stage is for the staff to pilot the educational programmes with their respective students in prison education and for the producers to make any necessary modifications. After the modifications have been made, the three interactive multi-media programmes will be mainstreamed in prison education (particularly in the OLCs), throughout the CDVEC and second level/Adult Education systems in Ireland.

The Pre-release Courses

Pre-release Courses have been established in Wheatfield, Mountjoy, and Arbour Hill prisons. Within the next two months, Pre-release Courses will also be developed in the Women's Prison and the Training Unit (Mountjoy Complex). The main elements of each course are:

- Personal Planning - information on education, training and employment opportunities, accommodation and social welfare entitlements. This element includes job seeking skills, job applications, interviewing skills and basic information on tax,

PRSI, etc. As part of the programme outside speakers from a range of organisations (e.g., FÁS, CERT, Threshold, Eastern Health Board (EHB), CDVEC and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs are invited to speak to the group.

- Personal Development - including communication skills, decision making skills, assertiveness and coming to terms with their criminal behaviour.
- Personal Care - includes practical cookery classes, diet and nutrition, budgeting and personal and health care.

Each Course lasts approximately 6 to 8 weeks (except in Arbour Hill where a 12 week course is in operation) and is organised by a Co-Ordinator with other prison education staff making specific inputs. Mountjoy have now run five groups since October 1996, Wheatfield four, and Arbour Hill one (to finish at Christmas 1997). Each group contains approximately eight trainees. The manager of the project speaks to each group about the benefits of the Post-release Centre and this is reinforced by the Pre-release Co-ordinators and other staff. The total number of trainees who have been referred into the Post-release Centre is approximately 30.

The three existing Pre-release Courses have now fulfilled the objectives of the Project and have been fully integrated and mainstreamed into their respective Education Units.

The Post-release Centre

The Post-release Centre in Granby Row – the *Pathways* Centre - following building alterations and having been fully equipped (including PCs, printers, office equipment, kitchen equipment and materials) began operations in October 1996. Staffing is as follows:

- full-time staff - Project Manager, Administrative Secretary, three Community Support Workers (all ex-prisoners);
- part-time staff - two Counsellors (Vocational Guidance and Personal) and teachers/trainees who also teach in the prisons.

The Centre has offered support, guidance advice and information to 122 participants (ex-prisoners), who attend on a voluntary basis. They were referred to the Centre from the following sources:

- Pre-release Courses - 23%;
- Prison teachers - 27%;
- Ex-prisoners (including friends and relatives) - 23%;
- Drug Rehabilitation Centres - 11%;
- Probation and Welfare (including PACE - Care & Education of Offenders) - 10%;
- Prisons outside Dublin - 3%;
- FÁS - 1%; and,
- Gardaí - 1%.

Each participant attending the Centre is interviewed and assessed and give an individual plan/timetable. As part of this induction Programme they are actively encouraged to see the Vocational Guidance Counsellor and, if necessary, the Personal Counsellor. They also attend an informal session with one of the support workers. Each participant is given a timetabled programme of classes/activities to suit their needs and this is negotiated and drawn up by the Project Manager. The vast majority of participants are or have been drug users or have a history of alcoholism.

The type of classes/activities include: post-release sessions, personal development sessions, English (basic literacy to Leaving Certificate), study skills, computers, open learning sessions, creative writing, social studies, history, health education, parenting, cookery, art, photography and digital imaging, drama, video (e.g., production of a promotional video about the Centre to be shown in all the prisons), music, physical education and outdoor pursuits (e.g., hillwalking, watersports, weekend trip to the Delphi Centre in Mayo). All these activities/classes not only increase the skill level of each participant but also help them to gain confidence and self-esteem. This is important in preparing them for referral.

The percentages of participants referred onto employment, training courses and educational courses are as follows:

- Employment - 17%;
- Training & Upskilling - 22%;
- Educational Courses - 7%; and,
- Drug Rehabilitation Centres - 1%.

There is a significant number of recently recruited and long standing participants who are involved in a programme of pre-training/preparation for referral (39%). These participants need to build up their confidence, self esteem and develop their social and life skills before being referred onto employment, training and educational courses. They also need vocational guidance and in many cases personal counselling.

Participants who have been referred on will often attend classes/activities on a regular basis, drop in to talk to staff or maintain contact by phone. They are tracked by means of attendance at the Centre, letters, telephone and in some cases by contacting the organisation/institution concerned.

A small percentage of participants have either re-offended (8 %) or dropped out 6%).

Guidance, Support and Other Services

The guidance staff in the Centre offer a comprehensive assessment and guidance service to ex-prisoners. This is often in the form of one-to-one counselling. The Vocational Guidance Counsellor also uses aptitude and interest tests and computer based information systems as part of the assessment/guidance process. Both Counselors meet once a week to discuss referrals and individual cases. The CDVEC Psychological Service gives them both regular support in the form of a monthly meeting with one of the CDVEC psychologists.

The Citizens Information database is being piloted in the Centre as part of a programme organised by the National Social Service Board. The database contains over 1600 items of information

classified into broad subject areas including education, employment, housing, social welfare etc. The database will be accessed by the Project Manager, the two Counsellors, teaching staff and support workers.

The three Community Support workers play an important role in supporting and advising ex-prisoners on a range of issues (e.g., accommodation, social welfare) as well as offering support in terms of peer counselling. They are also involved in marketing the Centre to outside groups and organisations (e.g., drug rehabilitation centres, community groups). Two of the workers are employed through the FÁS Jobs Initiative and the third through a Community Employment Scheme. They all receive significant amounts of training.

A new initiative has been the organisation of school liaison activities, whereby the Support Workers visit schools, Youthreach Centres and Community Workshops in the Dublin area and talk about their life experiences as ex-prisoners. This is often integrated with a crime awareness programme organised by the institution concerned. The feedback from the organisations has been more than positive.

On accommodation issues for ex-prisoners, the Eastern Health Board (EHB) and Dublin Corporation have been contacted and written to on matters concerning homelessness, private rented accommodation, increased provision of Corporation housing and the allocation of stable accommodation for this client group on release from prison. The EHB have visited the Centre on this matter and the Project Manager has made direct contact with a member of Dublin Corporation at the Housing Department. Policy changes and raising awareness on this issue are gradual and ongoing.

Conclusions

The project has fulfilled its specific objectives and in the process has improved the educational provision in prisons as well as providing a guidance and support system for ex-prisoners.

The reasons why the Pathways Centre has been successful in recruiting and referring participants is because:

- they attend voluntarily;
- it is seen as being independent of the justice system; and,
- the support services and classes/activities it provides.

The balance between a structured programme and a flexible approach means that attendance and co-operation by the participants is very positive.

The Post-release Centre will need to be mainstreamed and to enable this process to be implemented a proposal with full costings will be submitted to the CDVEC within the next month.

This will enable a larger number of prisoners to develop their educational/vocational skills, their personal skills and their confidence and self-esteem. This will also lead to greater access to education/training and employment opportunities through the guidance, support and advice prisoners and ex-prisoners receive in the Pre-release Course and the Post-release Centre.

The project has increased educational provision in prison by creating greater access and increasing skill levels through Open Learning systems. It has also initiated the development of interactive multi-media programmes for independent learning inside and outside prison.

In terms of Pre and Post-release the Project has provided support, guidance and information on educational, training and employment opportunities, as well as accommodation and social welfare. The project has developed a good relationship with the Probation and Welfare Service particularly in terms of referrals and liaison. It also means that policy changes can be made at organisational level concerning the support and advice given to ex-prisoners. There is also a direct link with PACE (Care and Education of Offenders) in terms of referrals on a TR (Temporary Release) basis and the use of the Vocational Guidance Counsellor by clients from PACE.

There has been an ongoing campaign to influence policy in regards to accommodation for ex-prisoners and to date there has been a recognition by Dublin Corporation and the EHB that changes need to be made. Contacts have been established and both organisations have made efforts to accommodate the problem and deal with individual cases.

The project has also had visits from Social Workers, Local Community Groups, Drug Rehabilitation Agencies, the Bridge Project, trainee Gardaí, prison teachers and Probation and Welfare Officers from outside Dublin. All these groups and organisations refer ex-prisoners to the Centre.

In terms of mainstreaming the Post-release Centre, there would need to be additions made to the services offered in the Centre. The main additions would be:

- to provide formal training in peer counselling and community leadership for selected ex-prisoners to form the basis for the future development of the Centre as an agency of self-help for ex-prisoners;
- to establish a workshop/enterprise facility in the Centre with a view to piloting a number of small enterprises in, for example digital imaging and desktop publishing; and,
- to establish formal links with employers in order to place ex-prisoners on work experience programmes and on completion to employ them on a full-time basis.

We have come to the conclusion that the above additions would improve the services offered by the Centre and enable ex-prisoners to have more opportunities to obtain employment and training. Prisoners and ex-prisoners need greater access to educational provision in prisons and guidance and support on release from prisons. This will enable them to gain access to educational/training/employment opportunities and have help break the cycle of criminal behaviour.

The Hive Project

Carol O'Sullivan

Firstly, I want to give a summary of what I intend to cover in my presentation. I'll start with the origins of the Local Employment Service (LES) to remind ourselves of what it is and why it was developed. Secondly, I will give a description of the Integra project promoted by the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU), that is, the Hive Project. Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to some of the lessons we have learned from the project and show how it has contributed to the development of INOU policy and, hopefully, national policy.

The Local Employment Service

The persistently high levels of long-term unemployment in Ireland have prompted much debate at a number of levels:

- Government;
- within the community and voluntary sector;
- in consultative fora such as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF); and,
- Within the INOU itself.

Widespread consensus has developed that the best way out of long-term unemployment is securing a job. Also, it is widely acknowledged that those who have been out of work for a long time need support, assistance and training to become job-ready. The debate has also centred on the need to have all existing services, and any other innovative ways of ensuring that people get jobs, co-ordinated and easily accessible.

The Government decision to establish the LES followed on from this debate and from a number of reports and recommendations, beginning with the NESF Report, *Ending Long-term Unemployment***,** which had been strongly influenced by the INOU. Following the publication of this report, the Government established the *Task Force on Long-Term Unemployment*, whose terms of reference were to carry out a detailed examination of the NESF report, including a detailed assessment of the recommendation to establish a locally based employment service.

Following the *Interim Report of the Task Force* in 1995, the Government made a number of key decisions.

- It accepted the central recommendation of the Report to establish the LES, and assigned overall responsibility for the service to the Minister for Enterprise and Employment.
- It established National Advisory Groups to advise the Minister.
- It established a Policy Unit within the Department to support the Advisory Groups and oversee the delivery of the service.
- It directed all Departments and State agencies to work in and through the Local Management Committees.

The initial LESs were to be set up in the 12 Partnership Areas and two non- partnership areas on a pilot basis.

What is the LES? I want to highlight two aspects of it. First, **it is a gateway,** a gateway that should lead to a job for an unemployed person. But if needs be, it should first point them in the direction of training/education programmes and other supports they might need in order to improve their prospects of securing worthwhile work suited to their individual needs. I mentioned the need for co-ordination earlier. It cannot be overstated. In the past a variety of services made up the components of a national service: FÁS, Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, the education sector, particularly Vocational Education Committees (VECs), Area Based Partnership Companies, and community based and voluntary groups. Problems existed for an unemployed person trying to access these services as there were varying

degrees of co-operation and confrontation between the different elements.

Second, **it is a client-centred service**. The LES has two clients, the job seeker and the employer. Its aim is to mediate the right person into the right job. The core value of mediation is that of a willing contract between mediator and jobseeker. The LES is a voluntary service and any degree of compulsion means that the contract is flawed.

Why the INOU Integra Project?

The two main aims of the INOU Integra programme were:

- to enhance the services provided by the LES; and,
- to maintain its focus on the long-term unemployed.

To further these aims a training programme was developed. There were two strands to this.

Strand One: Training the Trainers

Eight trainers were selected from the ranks of the unemployed in order to become trainers themselves. The objective of strand one was to provide quality, accredited training so that these people could provide additional training to staff of the LES and the wider voluntary and community sector in general. This combined with their own personal experiences of being unemployed has brought a unique dimension to the training that is currently being provided to LES staff.

Strand Two: Training the Representatives

The objective of this strand was to train people who were LES management committee members to effectively represent the needs of the unemployed users of the service and ensure that the focus of the service on the long-term unemployed. This network is providing not only support for the individuals themselves but is enhancing the work of the LES nationally. Members of the network are continuing to meet monthly to contribute to the development of the LES both locally and nationally.

What are the Lessons we have Learned from the Project?
Through our work to date with the trainers and user representatives we believe we have successfully contributed to the development of policy within the LES and hence enhanced the service being offered to unemployed people. This has been achieved by the integration of learning from the project with the central work of the INOU in our representative roles on national bodies. The following are key issues we feel are fundamental to the continued development of the LES:

- unemployed representation on LES management committees;
- LES staff training;
- national versus local;
- partnership.

Unemployed Representation on LES Management Committees: Trusting the long-term unemployed user is essential if the service is to be a success. For this trust to be nurtured, the unemployed users of the LES must feel a sense of ownership of the service. They must feel that it is of high quality and professional and, more importantly, that it meets their needs. They have the right to participate as equal partners in the design, decision- making and implementation of the LES. They have a right to be represented on the management committees.

Community organisations and Unemployed Centres have become Contact Points and are involved in the delivery of the service. Their positions on management committees have a double function:

- to represent the unemployed people that use the service; and,
- to represent a provider of the service.

> *The INOU recommends that unemployed people be directly represented on the LES Management Committee, separately from the interests of service providers, even when the service providers are Unemployed Centres. (The Margin)*

LES Staff Training: For the development and delivery of our own training programme, it was essential that the training needs of the staff of the LES were researched. A detailed questionnaire was completed by a number of LES Co-ordinators. This information, along with structured visits and meetings with LES staff, gave us a clear picture of some of the training needs that were arising whilst the service was developing. The list would be too exhaustive to include all, but the fact that not only mediators and guidance counsellors were calling for further training but also other key staff is very important to note. The importance of the role of the Contact Point staff had been overlooked. In many cases they have first contact with the long-term unemployed person. In some cases they are the ones who make the decision to refer a person to a mediator. That these staff are professionally trained is fundamental to the success of the service.

We also experienced through the programme, the need for management committees to be trained. They are a group of people, coming together to deliver a service which has very distinct responsibilities. Training in the areas of decision-making and negotiation skills could only lead to improvement in the delivery of the service and facilitate in keeping the focus on long-term unemployment.

National versus Local: While rooted at local level, if the service is to survive and prosper it must have clear direction at national level. The *White Paper on Human Resources Development*, published in 1997, suggests that FÁS has responsibility for the LES. We feel that FÁS should have a key role to play, and should sit on national or local LES advisory committees, but the unique nature of the LES must be maintained.

As mentioned earlier unemployed people feel let down by the system. For them to trust the LES it must be separate from the national employment service. At a time when the LES is expanding, it is quite worrying that the present Government, as of yet, has made no decisions on the White Paper.

Another key issue at national level is that of the Policy Unit. As mentioned, it has two functions, to oversee the delivery of the service and support the work of the Advisory Group. Unless this is adequately staffed and given direction it cannot fulfil its roles efficiently and the LES will grow in different directions locally, without national direction.

Partnership: As part of the Integra programme we visited many LESs and spoke in-depth with service providers. Frustrations were expressed by some at the ineffectiveness of their local management committees. The concept of partnership was working at varying levels of co-operation in different local areas. The same fears and frustrations seemed to be echoed nationally.

The Government claims it is committed to partnership and has representatives from community and voluntary groups on many different fora but partnership at national level regarding the LES is tokenistic at present.

There are two groups that meet nationally at present. The Policy Advisory Group (PAG) and the Interdepartmental Advisory Group – the decision-making one. The INOU is represented on the PAG which has met infrequently. Finally, after much deliberation, the two groups are to be joined for their next meeting. True partnership should mean that all share in the decision-making process.

6

Closing Address

What can Policymakers Learn from Local Actions?

Andy Hirst
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Given that there are many good examples of local action, why are there very few effective programmes? I would contend that enough is known about the micro efficiency of actions - the principles of design, delivery and management of local projects - to be able to establish many of the ideal operating criteria which mainstream programmes ought to embody. We cannot design policy solely on the basis of local actions, for example, very little about how local efficiency interacts with the macro situation. The basic premise is that local actions can (and do) make an important contribution to the development of policy - only they have the practical experience to help formulate the detail of policies in a way which reinforces its wider objectives and does not unintentionally undermine their achievement.

Measures tackling long-term unemployment will work most effectively when they are designed within a national framework which has scope for adaptation to meet local circumstances. Policy instruments need to be few in number, preferably designed in a way which:

- ensures simplicity and speedy procedures for obtaining funding;
- has maximum flexibility, for application to a wide range of ideas and circumstances;
- gives other actors the incentive to contribute their own resources as far as possible;
- facilitates drawing funding together from a range of sources, including projects' own income from trading where appropriate; and,

- attributes a specific rationale to the policy *and appropriate criteria which are imposed as conditions of funding*.

The latter point cannot be stressed too strongly. All too frequently new policy initiatives set out with laudable objectives only to be scuppered by criteria and an implementation which effectively limits their ability to achieve their objectives. While the delivery 'infrastructure' in many Member States has been decentralised, with local organisations being involved in partnership delivery, many new initiatives still retain national criteria in the form of expected unit costs and planning assumptions which can rigidly define the scope for action.

For too long we have continued to design and deliver mainstream programmes in exactly the same manner - top down with rigid rules and funding criteria, applied in all areas whatever the local circumstances. This approach denies easy access to funding to exploit local opportunities, build partnerships and combine packages of support as appropriate. It is my experience that opportunities to effectively respond to long-term unemployment at the local level have become smaller and typically last longer - so the requirement is for more actions running for relatively short periods. To respond to this programmes need to deliver sufficient and flexible funding as efficiently as possible.

Any call for a loosening of the purse strings tends to meet with a general concern over the possibility of spending tax-payers money without any direct control over what is done with it. But I would suggest that the current concern of policymakers with the nature of the targeting and delivery of actions - the 'inputs' to the actions - does not provide any information on what is and what is not working. Much more emphasis is required on the nature of the actions' outcomes - how many people get jobs, how many move on to the next stage of re-integration, etc. – and, most importantly, which groups are succeeding and which are not. Discussions with policymakers on how to respond to the needs of disadvantaged groups in the labour market habitually focus on which measures are targeted on which groups. An analysis and discussion of

which groups benefit from which measures - who is getting the jobs as a result of these measures - is much less frequent.

The forthcoming reform of the European Social Fund will concentrate programmes on prevention and re-integration actions and embody actions for the disadvantaged as part of the mainstream. In addition, new policy initiatives in Member States are drawing on effective local actions for their inspiration where the overall objectives of policy, the emphasis on delivery through partnership, and the range of actions envisaged all reflect best practice principles. These developments present both an opportunity and a challenge to Integra:

- the opportunity for Integra actions to become a more accepted part of the mainstream; and,
- a challenge to retain links with the most disadvantaged target group while competing directly with mainstream approaches for the less disadvantaged.

There is a need, therefore, for initiatives such as Integra to support the understanding of who benefits, and to what degree, from different types of actions. This is typically measured in terms of how many achieved qualifications and how many got jobs. To measure the benefit for inclusion we must move to a more detailed understanding of whether these outcomes are shared equally across disadvantaged groups or whether they are only available to the less disadvantaged clients. In addition, Integra should develop new measures which are a more appropriate indication of the type of outcomes that actions with very disadvantaged groups can achieve. We need to measure progression from social and economic exclusion towards ultimate integration in the labour market not just the latter stages in that process.

Moreover, we have to be aware of the bigger picture. If long-term unemployment and very long-term unemployment continue to exist at unacceptably high levels, despite the efficiency of local actions, we must recognise that more fundamental action may be required. The starting point for such intervention has to include the recovery of the socially excluded and an acceptance that

actions which address non-labour market problems are a required part of the re-integration process.

Very few actions outside of specific initiatives such as Integra contain measures which are specifically designed to recover people from social exclusion. We should recognise the distance between the position of many socially excluded people and their participation in the labour market. Actions are required to encourage the disadvantaged to the periphery before (other) initiatives have any possibility of re-integrating people back into mainstream activity effectively. Promotion of the role of recovery measures will go hand-in-hand with an ability to prove their worth.

The pre-conditions for this to happen are threefold:

- experimental local actions (the resources to attempt new approaches);
- clear criteria for success (what measures define a 'good' model); and,
- the capacity for policymakers to take on board the lessons.

What makes good local action and what makes good policy are not the same. Policymakers are required to encompass a broader perspective and frequently have to take account of wider objectives that conflict with good practice lessons. As I noted above, many Member States do recognise the importance of greater synergy between different government departments but local actions will still need to provide experience to ensure the details of new programmes do not inhibit flexibility unintentionally. For example, the use of average unit cost funding in programmes means that those projects which have a predominately long-term unemployed client group (not unusual at the local level) will suffer a shortfall of resources on almost every client.

Mechanisms for transfer are either active or passive. Passive measures - manuals, reports, studies etc. - have the advantage of wider dissemination but rarely lead directly to change. Active

measures - co-working, demonstration of local actions etc - can make an immediate impact on local delivery but are by their nature highly focused. Both are required and both rely heavily on the ability to demonstrate effectiveness to a wider audience. Measures of success are therefore very important to articulate *why* particular models are working. *Transfer* is more about understanding the action in its original state before trying to make it work in a new situation. There is therefore more to transfer than just "not reinventing the wheel". Discovering why the wheel works is much more important for all partners in transfer.

Measures of success should not be imposed externally on local actions. Rather projects should determine in their own terms what they think constitutes success. I would, however, suggest that these focus on three issues:

- the efficiency of the local actions - how successful are they in progressing people towards the mainstream labour market;
- the effectiveness of transfer - to what extent have the lessons learnt been disseminated; and,
- the effect on the scale of the problem - not just how many disadvantage people can be helped but how widely can the model be disseminated.

It is the scale of the problem that poses the most critical questions for local actions. Strategies to address this include: encouraging greater interaction between different government economic and social departments; providing the opportunity to re-assess the cost of financial priorities - we can no longer ignore the very large cost burden placed on our economies by social exclusion and its consequences; establishing social inclusion as an important *economic* contribution; and, finally, providing sufficient examples of effective models to move policy away from treating the population to treating the problem.